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Vol 4 Don't Tell Me This Is the True History of the Three Kingdoms!

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Chapter 1: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (1)

Meng De POV

"We have received confirmation this afternoon, Che Zhou, Inspector of Xu state, has died from a fatal wound from an arrow 3 days before in Shouchun city!" A military courier came sprinting and huffing into the main hall during morning Court session and delivered this news.

When this news was delivered, I, who was reading out from a scroll while kneeling, couldn't help but to draw a deep breath.

The worst part was that this news was delivered at the worst possible time in the worst possible place.

As expected, the hundreds of officials began whispering to each other upon hearing this news.

"Che Zhou... Isn't she the Inspector of Xu state who was sent to assist Imperial Uncle Liu to take down Shouchun city?"

"But didn't we just receive news yesterday that Shouchun city has been taken? And there wasn't anything about General Che Zhou being injured?"

"Could it be that Imperial Uncle..."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Are you daft, this means that the great Han will rise once more!"

All the officials engaged in gossip that centred around Xuan De even though the military courier's message did not even mention him at all. Just this news, along with Xuan De's title of Imperial Uncle, is more than enough to re-ignite the hopes of getting rid of all these damned officials.

This made me feel frustrated to no end.

And to think Che Zhou actually...

I could feel that my grip on the bamboo scroll was extremely tight now, but at

the current situation, I could only shake my head slightly.

Things are going to be very troublesome.

I somehow made it through Court, and in my mind, I knew who was behind this.

As I left the palace, Feng Xiao was waiting for me at the gates just as I predicted. In her hands were the reins to the pony I gave her.

Apart from Feng Xiao, I'm guessing Xun Yu and Cheng Yu should be around here somewhere.

"Did you leak this news to the Imperial Court?" I asked in a helpless tone as I walked toward Feng Xiao and stared at her, who was currently in a respectful bow but had a wry smile on.

"Momentous national happenings should be reported to the Son of Heaven."

"Cut the act, you think I don't know what you all mean to happen?" I looked at Feng Xiao and at the tall grass at both sides of road out of the corner of my eyes.

The grass moved somewhat before stopping.

Of course, today's weather was perfectly clear and tranquil with no wind at all.

Usually, I'm the one who reports military affairs in morning Court. This isn't to hide information from the Son of Heaven, but from those incumbent officials from the previous administration who try and hinder me at every turn. And with what happened today, they were able to grab hold of something that could be used against me.

They must be feeling very happy hearing that my subordinate was killed by the Imperial Uncle.

"You should have been there to see it, how excited those officials were in Court."

"Oh? Looks like I missed out on a delicious scene?" Feng Xiao waved her hands, feigning innocence.

"..." I didn't bother replying and mounted my horse.

Who knows how many times she simulated that scene in her mind before

making that decision?

"My lord, what do you think we should do?"

What to do? You lot have already forced me into a corner, yet you still ask me what to do?

Of course, the reason why Feng Xiao is going this far is not to make life difficult for me. She has an end goal in mind with this.

Though the report did not mention it, but the responsibility Che Zhou's death has been conclusively placed on Liu Xuan De. If I just feign ignorance and leave it be, then my position in Court will be tenuous. All the fear and pressure I have been exerting on them will all become naught in a very short time.

So, to prevent all this, I only have one path left before me.

"We can only launch an offensive on Xuan De. From the present situation, it looks like he has willfully murdered a high level official." Every word that I said was probably perfectly predicted by Feng Xiao. The very reason why she leaked that piece of news was to force me to attack Xuan De and give me a legitimate reason to do so.

From an objective perspective, it is indeed a good scheme.

Not only can I get rid of a dangerous element, I can also strengthen my control over the Imperial Court.

And the very reason why she did not discuss this with me beforehand is because she knows I will never agree to it.

And now that she has done it already, I have no choice but to move according to her script.

Feng Xiao is truly formidable indeed.

"Alright, I'll send someone to dispatch the troops." Feng Xiao said and then waved her hand. As though they were waiting for this very moment, 2 figures sprang out of the grass immediately and disappeared before I could see who they were. Feng Xiao then dusted herself before getting onto her pony, "Then I'll be—"

"Halt." I said as I placed my horsewhip horizontally across from her and

stopped her.

“Un? What is it, my lord?” Feng Xiao turned to look at me with a very meaningful smile.

Reflected in her eyes should be my troubled face. I can’t even be sure if I can show a surface smile at this time.

“Why do you have to go this far? Haven’t I talked about this before.” I looked ahead, not at Feng Xiao, as I asked vexedly.

Feng Xiao gave a ‘hm hm’ and then brought her pony around my horsewhip.

“... I don’t dislike Lord Liu Bei. Rather, as a woman, I feel that Lord Liu Bei is a kind and dependable man. If I’m correct, my lord should feel the same way as well.”

“I, I don’t really...”

“But,” Feng Xiao was by now past my horsewhip and she continued in a completely solemn tone that was unusual for her, “You are my lord, and I must think about things from a holistic perspective and weigh the gains and losses from that perspective. Leaving aside how I think, shouldn’t my lord be considering things from this angle as well?”

As she said so, she prepared to make her pony gallop off.

“Feng Xiao, one last question.” I stopped her again just as she was about to leave, “Was Che Zhou really killed by Xuan De?”

“...” Feng Xiao did not say anything. Perhaps she did not plan on giving me an answer or perhaps she felt that it was something I could investigate on my own.

But in the end, for some reason, she still said it, “In the latest report that just came in, Lord Liu Bei said that Che Zhou was killed by a stray arrow. He has since given her a fitting funeral and burial for her title of General of the Cavalry and Chariots. Presently, he is stationed in Xu state.”

As for whether he killed her, it’s up to you my lord.

As she said so, she whipped her pony into a gallop. As I rode on my horse, a deep-seated dissatisfaction filled me. I firmly believe that Xuan De did not kill her. As for Che Zhou’s death, though it was something unexpected, it’s not

something that was unusual. Objectively speaking, it's Cheng Yu who should be punished for ordering Che Zhou to assassinate Xuan De. But Che Zhou's death was not because of this, so there's no point pursuing this point any further.

I eventually got tired of sitting on a horse and got off and walked back to my mansion.

The next day, after all the preparations were made, I led my troops for Xu state with complicated feelings.

Chapter 2: Don't tell me this is a chapter I randomly wrote

Liu Bei POV

I stood atop the city walls as I gazed at the clouds which floated in the blue skies and the civilians of Xu state who were enjoying their safe and prosperous lives. It seems like my anxiety has finally begun to recede.

The gods of autumn sent some autumn breeze blowing my way from time to time which made the weather nice and cool.

I'm back once more to Xu state city.

It's been about half a month since we left Xuchang. I'd thought I would never have a chance to return to this place but in the blink of an eye, here I am once more.

Everything here was the same as before. And like before, it was a little noisy.

We should have returned to Xuchang directly after taking Shouchun but I felt some responsibility for General Che Zhou's death and I though I ought to come over to Xu state and explain what happened. When the officials came out to welcome us, we saw that it was the father and son pair, Chen Deng and Chen Gui, as well as a bunch of familiar faces. Since there was no antagonism between us, we decided to station our troops here.

Of course, there are other reasons for coming here.

"Big brother, what are you doing here?" Just then, Yun Chang's voice could be heard. I've already gotten familiar enough that I can easily recognise her voice.

I turned back and saw the red haired girl who was filled with ideals and aspirations standing there. As the autumn winds whipped up her hair which were lit up by the sunshine, it felt like her hair was ablaze.

"Ah, I'm just here to get some fresh air." I said as I flashed a smile to Yun Chang before turning back to the city, "I also thought I'd get a look at the civilians in the city which we haven't seen in a while."

"Hou hou~~" Yun Chang sighed and walked over to where I was and looked down, "I was still thinking that big brother was reminiscing about Lord Tao Qian~"

Honestly, I was indeed reminiscing about him, and Lord Han Fu. The passing of life is something that I can never forget, especially when it all happened in front of my very eyes.

Fate.

That's all I can say.

And leaving aside the others, my fate as Liu Bei has progressed thus far.

"... Big brother, are you still thinking about the matter with Che Zhou?"

Perhaps the feelings I am finding increasingly difficult to keep inside are showing on my face.

"That's right~~ Che Zhou's death has really caused me a lot of trouble." I scratched my head as I laughed dryly, and thought back to what the Xu state 3 suggested to me this morning at Shouchun city.

(We cannot return to Xuchang.) (That's right, this matter is extremely problematic since Che Zhou died in our presence.) (Leaving aside what Cao Cao herself thinks, her subordinates may seek vengeance against you.)

And so, to buy time, we came to Xu state. But even so, we will still be defeated by Meng De.

As someone who has come from the future, I wanted to voice this out but I couldn't in the end.

Where else could we go, besides Xu state? I couldn't think of an alternative and so I had no choice but to let myself be swept by the currents of history.

"Yun Chang."

"Un?"

"Do you think that Meng De will attack us?"

"Un..." Yun Chang closed her eyes and sank into thought before answering, "I think not."

"Why's that?"

"Because she is a virtuous person."

Virtuous huh?

"Indeed," I said, almost half to myself, "But there are times when one has to make choices that one doesn't believe in."

Even if Meng De does not decide to act, and her subordinates believe that I am innocent, I still can't get rid of the label from outsiders that I killed Che Zhou. And thus, Meng De will definitely be forced to respond in some way.

"Never mind, no point thinking about this now." I sighed slightly and put my hands on my waist as I stretched my back, "Speaking of which, why are you alone? Where are the others?"

As I said so, I reluctantly parted from the weathered dark grey bricks and descended to the city. Yun Chang followed behind me.

"Ah, Yuan Shu said she wanted to tour the city, and the others had some shopping of their own to do so they all went to the market."

The market huh... Xu state city's market is indeed a good place to kill time. Apart from everyday goods, I even saw some clockwork toys which you can't find in the future. It is indeed interesting.

"And what about you? Is it because you don't find anything interesting there?"

After she heard what I said, Yun Chang pouted for some reason.

"I was late because I was inspecting the stables and missed them." She said as she looked at me disdainfully, "Could it be that big brother thinks that I'm a boring person?"

"Ah, ah? How can that be!"

"Please look at me when you speak."

Indeed, the Yun Chang in my impressions has always been someone who only discusses official matters, aspirations and martial arts. I've never seen her do anything else.

Ah, could it be that she likes rearing small animals?

"Really, big brother doesn't observe me enough at all." She lowered her head in disappointment when she saw my lost look,

"..." My heart hurt from the surge of guilt and I was unable to reply, and could only continue descending wordlessly.

"Big brother really can't be helped huh... Though it feels like it wouldn't be big brother otherwise..." Yun Chang said as she held her forehead and then smiled as she folded her arms across her chest and continued, "I like playing chess and reading in my free time, big brother better remember from now on."

"Reading? The Spring and Autumn Annals?"

(TL: Spring and Autumn Annals is a series of records which are basically just that – Records. Chinese scholars from later dynasties produced literary commentaries that attempted to understand the meanings behind them, and these have become the source of many Chinese idioms and sayings.)

"I do read some others," She laughed dryly, "But does big brother like playing chess? Why don't you play with me some time?"

How can I say that I only know how to play Gomoku?

(TL: That's the Japanese name, and it appears to be the more well-known name. In short, it's 5-in-a-row played on a Go / Weiqi board.)

Ah, but I really don't know what everyone is like huh. We've been together for so long so I really want to get to know them well.

Perhaps I should start being more proactive on this front?

"I don't really know the rules but I wouldn't mind playing some time."

"Oh? If you don't know, I can teach you big brother."

I nodded, to which Yun Chang replied with a smile.

Yun Chang really is a good girl.

"Yun Chang, let's go." I grabbed Yun Chang's hand and quickened the pace of descent.

"Ah ah~~ What's the matter? Why so sudden?!" She was confused at my sudden act and stumbled behind after me.

"We're going to the market," I turned back to face the red haired girl, "I'll accompany you."

The days in Xu state city are always the most serene of days.

How many more of such serene days do we have left?

Chapter 3: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (2)

Meng De POV

On the second day just before we were supposed to leave for Xu state, an idea came forth in me.

Though it was risky, I felt that it was the right time to come to a conclusion once and for all. Even if there wasn't the matter with Xuan De.

"What did you say, my lord?" Feng Xiao stood in front of me, with that characteristic perverted smile of hers, "Can you repeat that one more time?"

Hm hm, looks like she reacted just as expected.

"I didn't think Feng Xiao's ears would be faulty too huh~" I laughed as I stood up and placed my hands behind my back as I walked over to her, "I said that we should not be pointing our weapons at Liu Bei."

She looked at me, with a questioning look and covered her mouth with her sleeve. "Has my lord gone soft? I remember just yesterday that my lord..."

"Yuan Shao in Hebei." Feng Xiao's words stopped at these 4 words of mine.

She went silent for a moment before softly sighing and brought her hand from her mouth to her forehead. "My lord wishes to take Hebei?"

"That is correct. Does Feng Xiao think that this is a poor choice," I was now behind Feng Xiao and turned to look at her long black hair, "Or is Feng Xiao afraid."

I gave a few hearty laughs after I finished. My laughter didn't have any particular purpose, it was only to calm down the quivering in my voice.

Whether or not Feng Xiao is afraid, I have a lot of considerations when making this momentous move.

Yuan Shao is occupying Hebei with a large force. She has defeated Gongsun Zan, and has taken over Wuhuan, Xianbei and many other swathes of land. With the troops I have now, even opposing her is a problem, let alone conquest.

But, I was strangely confident.

It's time. Better for me to attack her than wait for her to attack me.

"Fine," Just as I was thinking about this, Feng Xiao seems to have been convinced and she bent her head in a grotesque 180-degree angle that seemed like her neck was broken to look at me, "Yuan Shao is a fitting target for us to bring down our full might on."

"Hou hou~" I laughed as a show to cover my nervousness.

From what she just said, seems like she thinks that Yuan Shao is not too difficult of an opponent. This confidence of hers has elevated her in my eyes once more.

Or could it be that I am the one who is too nervous?

"Then... That's that then." I stretched my back to try and relax, "Help me deliver the following messages: Li Dian and Yue Jin are to advance upstream, my little sister Cao Ren is to station her troops at Guandu, and as for logistics, Miao Cai will be in charge."

(TL: In the original, Cao Ren is a cousin.)

"And who will take care of defence?"

"Leave it to Yuan Rang." As I said so, I stepped out of the courtyard. The noisy streets of Xuchang seemed to be exceptionally rambunctious. And for some reason, my lips were curled up.

"Though my lord has said as much," Feng Xiao was not done yet, "Does my lord not intend on dealing with Liu Bei?"

I finally understood how serious Feng Xiao viewed Xuan De as a threat after hearing these words. Seems like she thinks Xuan De is even more dangerous than Yuan Shao.

(TL: In the original, Feng Xiao came up with the famous 10 points on how Cao Cao was superior to Yuan Shao. Depending on the version of actual history, he also viewed Liu Bei as a dangerous threat.)

And on this point, I am of the same opinion as her. Except that I have no intention of acting against Xuan De since I have my own considerations after all.

Of course, this isn't because I don't think of Xuan De as a worthy opponent. Feng Xiao's words have more or less piqued my competitive spirit against him.

"Let Liu Dai and Wang Zhong attack Xu state with 20,000..."

"Just Liu and Wang alone against Liu Bei?" As soon as I finished, Xun Yu's floating voice came from the grass beside the stairs.

Is she here as expected?

I no longer feel surprised at their omnipresence.

"Of course, I know that those 2 cannot possibly hope to defeat Xuan De." Giving them more troops is just a waste of resources. But to me, "Let their troops carry my flags and just stall for time. Ah, tell them not to attack or blockade the city. We just need to know Xuan De's movements. Anything else will have to wait until I have come to Xu state."

(TL: Armies, especially provincial ones, typically carried flags of their state or their commander as well as the overall commander. *E.g.* Liu Dai's forces may carry both Liu and Cao flags. Here, Meng De is saying that they should only carry Cao flags.)

"Well then, I'll be heading on first." Feng Xiao might not have detected or perhaps she doesn't think that my small schemes will hurt the big picture, and did not say anything else as she left the mansion.

Looking at Feng Xiao, I couldn't help but sigh. What is it that drives her to fight alongside me so fervently?

This made me think back to when Xun Yu first introduced me to Feng Xiao. Back then, before I could even say a single word, she spat out all my grand ambitions out along with blood.

Strange, sick, weird, wise.

At the same time, she is one of the few subordinates I can truly trust who is also my teacher in governing and military affairs.

As I was occupied with my thoughts, I realised that Feng Xiao was gone. I waved my hands and placed them as my back before looking at the grass, "You're not in opposition with me?"

“... Would my lord be referring to the matter with Yuan Shao or the matter with Liu Bei?”

“Un... Both I guess.”

“No objections.” On big picture considerations, whether it was her or Cheng Yu, their answers would always be quick and direct.

“Your reasons?”

“Reasons...” She repeated softly, “Of course, it is because my lord wishes for it to be so. And my lord has never made frivolous, over-reaching claims.”

Hou hou. Her absolute trust in me makes me feel a little proud of myself.

“Though you said as much, you must have done some analysis already, haven’t you?” I smiled as I walked closer to the grass.

“... Yes.”

“What are my odds of victory?”

“Too many variables, unable to compute.”

“Then can I win?”

“Yes.”

Ke.

“I certainly hope so.” I said as I drew a long sigh and made it to the grass, only to find that there was no longer anyone there.

She really is elusive huh.

— My lord has never made frivolous, over-reaching claims.

Xun Yu is right though. I never do things I have no confidence of. Ever since the incident of giving the jewelled sword, the way I consider every angle for every problem surprises even me.

But this isn’t something to be proud of. I’m still very young yet my vigor is spent. All that’s left is unending contemplation and caution.

There are times when I really want to return to the past self.

“Xun Yu is still around right? Help me summon Liu Dai and Wang Zhong.”

Xuan De, I wonder what you're doing now.

(TL: The incident of giving away a jewelled sword is Cao Cao's failed assassination of Dong Zhuo. This happened shortly after Dong Zhuo began to occupy the capital and before Cao Cao gathered the feudal lords. Cao Cao borrowed a jewelled sword from an official and tried to assassinate Dong Zhuo. He waited for Dong Zhuo to lower his guard but Dong Zhuo caught on, and Cao Cao pretended that he was going to offer him the sword. Cao Cao then left the capital before Dong Zhuo could suspect him.)

Liu Bei POV

It's been a week since we came to Xu state city and the pressure on us has become unbearable as troops began gathering at the borders. We decided on a meeting a couple of days ago to discuss the personnel deployment in Xu state and Xiapi. Since we came here, we've also ramped up recruitment efforts.

That said, as the feudal lord, it seems like my remaining in Xu state city is something set in stone.

"According to the latest reports, it seems like Imperial Chancellor Cao's armies are advancing here. Seems like she's personally leading them, and they are projected to arrive within 2 weeks." Zhang Liao read out the combined report from the second seat.

After she finished, I could feel that everyone's mood sank completely.

"I didn't think that Cao Cao would actually come for us. Could she really think that we are traitors?"

"Don't be so agitated Yi De. This is something that can't be helped." Yun Chang hurriedly pressed down on Yi De's forehead seeing as she was about to jump out, before turning to me, "I'd thought that big brother's hypothesis was too pessimistic but it seems like our circumstances are very dire."

"Indeed," Feng Xian said as she stroked Red Hare as always. I don't know if it's me, but it seems like Red Hare has become bigger. "Our combined forces number less than 20,000 and the bulk of whom are formerly Cao Cao's troops who cannot be relied on. The only armies that can be said to be ours are just the 3,000 in Xu state and 2,000 from Xiapi. Of these, a third were new recruits who

have yet to undergo the proper training.”

Un...

I crossed my hands on the table and leaned my head in. No matter how much I tried, I couldn’t think of a way to turn the situation around.

Some people might wonder why I don’t use my knowledge of history as someone who has come from the future to my advantage. On this, I can only apologise as I’m not a Three Kingdoms fanatic. My knowledge primarily comes from games and some modern editions of the Three Kingdoms.

(TL: By modern versions, he doesn’t mean light novels. But the actual Three Kingdoms, which have been edited for a contemporary audience.)

Damn it, if I knew it would be like this, I should have grabbed a copy of the Three Kingdoms before transferring here. That would definitely help somewhat.

Hai~ There’s no use saying that now. I can only follow the path before me.

“In any case, we can only ask for help from other feudal lords. With our forces, it will be difficult to achieve victory no matter what.” I said as I leaned on the table, feeling very tired in both mind and body.

“– About this,” Just as I finished, the Xu state 3 seemed to have things to say since a while back and got up together, “I actually intend to meet Yuan Shao and negotiate with her.” “As for me, I intend to make a trip to Jiangxia. The Governor of Jing state, Liu Biao, is a blood relative of yours after all and we should be able to get some help.” “What I really want to say is that I’m not going anywhere... Ah, Zi Zhong, don’t hit me while you’re smiling so brightly! It’s too scary! I’m going alright!! I’ll make a trip to where Sun Ce is but they’re still conquering Jiangdong so I’m not sure whether I can convince them at all.”

I didn’t think that these 3 had already thought of who to ask help from~ But...

“It probably won’t go too well right.” I smiled bitterly, at which Zi Zhong and Xiao Yong returned similarly bitter smiles.

That’s right. Someone like me is a burden after all. Though I have good relations with Sun Ce, she has her own matters to attend to. And now that Meng De has her sights on me, taking me in is akin to suicide.

"My lord should cease being pessimistic." Gong You suddenly spoke. She was not smiling bitterly. Instead, there was a confident glimmer in her eyes, "Don't forget our trump card."

Trump card?

"Hm hm, looks like you will have to depend on me after all!"

A familiar, haughty voice came from the door. I looked over and saw a petite figure with her hands on her waist. 2 attendants stood at both sides, one was clearly a warrior and the other was an administrator.

Wasn't this—

"Yuan Shu?!" I was extremely surprised that Yuan Shu was here, "Weren't you supposed to have left?"

"Hm hm~ Of course I'm leaving," Yuan Shu said as she walked into the hall. Though she'd lost everything, she still wore her thick, exquisite clothing. When she came before me, she pointed at me before continuing, "But the honey here was delicious so I stayed for a couple more days."

Yuan Shu really doesn't know how to read the atmosphere huh. Good thing Ji Ling and Yan Xiang behind her know how to clean up after her, seeing as they hurriedly came in and spoke to the rest.

Yuan Shu's personality huh... She really is Yuan Shao's sister huh~~ I sighed once more.

Un? Yuan Shu? Could it be...

"That's right," Gong You smiled when she saw my moment of realisation, "As long as I go with Yuan Shu, the chances of success are significantly higher."

Oh~~~ That's right, Yuan Shu is Yuan Shao's little sister~

I'd thought it was only me who didn't get it, but it seems like everyone else only realised it just now as well.

"Hm hm~~ Liu Bei, you better be grateful to me," Yuan Shu left these words and swung her sleeves as she made to leave.

For what did she come here for? Could it be that she just wanted to leave

these last words? ... Yeah, it's very likely that's the case.

"Umm..."

"Un?"

She stopped halfway and turned around and said–

I forgot to say this before. Thank you, for sparing me and my subordinate generals.

In that instant, I couldn't believe that those words came out from Yuan Shu. Only after she left was I able to accept this as reality.

Perhaps Yuan Shu has changed.

"... Then." "We'll be making our preparations to leave as well." "Xuan De can just stay here, do nothing and be a sponger."

That's so mean! Why do you have to say that! I protested and Xiao Yong made a face at me before leaving with the other 2.

But with this, we have a chance of turning this situation around. Next will be who to send to Xiapi.

"Ah, we discussed this beforehand already." Zhang Liao said, "I think that I should defend Xiapi along with my lord (Feng Xian), while Lord Guan Yu and Lord Zhang Fei defends Xu state city."

"It's more efficient that way." Feng Xian added.

That is true. Feng Xian and Zhang Liao have been working together for a much longer time after all.

"You should take Chen Deng and Chen Gui together with you as well. They are excellent with administrative affairs." Yun Chang said as she walked over to Feng Xian and fondled Red Hare who we would probably not see for a while.

"Un, let's do it like that then." Feng Xian and Zhang Liao got up and headed outside.

"See you again Xuan De."

"Please take care of yourself, my lord."

Feng Xian's expression was terrible, and Zhang Liao's smile was stiff.

Of course, I know that my expression isn't much better.

Hua Tuo, Gan Qing and Mi Zhen are still in Xuchang while Feng Xian, Zhang Liao and the Xu state 3 have left. Now the only ones left in Xu state city are us 3.

I know that this is something that can't be helped, but I couldn't but to feel lonely for once in a long while.

This was a time of war and chaos and we aren't just ordinary kids. When fate decrees it, be it separation or reunion, we have no choice but to comply.

Even though I know all of this, I still wish for everyone to be together.

I shook my head as I sat there,

"Big brother, everyone will be together again." Just then, Yi De leapt over to me and rubbed her soft, white cheeks against me.

"Don't worry big brother, the 2 of us are still here. As for the others, their hearts are with big brother." Yun Chang came over as well and she placed her hand over heart as she smiled warmly.

How did these 2 guess what I was thinking about? I really don't know how.

To this, I only replied with a smile. That's right Yun Chang, I know.

Chapter 4: Don't tell me this is before Wang and Liu are captured

TL: Gong You best girl.

Sun Qian POV

I left Xu state and made a beeline for Yuan Shao. After about a week of travel, I was able to make it to Yuan Shao's palace in Nanpi county, Hebei using Yuan Shu, which we were now making our way in under the guidance of her retainers.

Though Yuan Shao belonged to an illustrious family, the sheer scale of the palace with its carved railings and jade inlays greatly exceeded the luxury that befitted that of a noble.

It was clear from this that the Great Han had fallen from its past glory days.

And at this time, my lord's face came to mind once again. I hadn't said much when I left, but worry filled my heart.

Was it really alright to leave my lord in Xu state city?

My lord doesn't know how to deal with official documents, how will he handle internal administration? My lord is soft-spoken, who will make a decision when the time comes? My lord has great affinity with women, if he is just a bit more proactive, he will definitely... As my lord's personal adviser, shouldn't I be silently by his side at this time?

... But~

I shook my head lightly, hoping to drive away all these unnecessary thoughts.

That's right, I have a mission at hand. What I must think about now is how to convince Yuan Shao.

Yuan Shao is dogmatic and simple-minded, but she is still an influential person and a hero of this era. Her conflicts with Cao Cao are no mere squabbles and any small mistake will reduce the loser to dust. Would Yuan Shu, who has now occupied You, Qing, Bing and Ji states, be willing to bother with this low return

high risk and troublesome alliance?

"Oi, what are you thinking about?" A casual voice came from in front of me, and I looked ahead to see that Yuan Shu was looking at me with eyes that were filled with pride.

"... Nothing." I moved my sleeve to cover my mouth before continuing slowly, "... How does Lord Yuan Shu intend on convincing your elder sister later?"

For some reason, Yuan Shu began laughing loudly when she heard these words of mine.

"Hahaha, so that's what you're thinking about huh." Yuan Shu looked relaxed as she shook her long and heavy sleeves before tucking her hands behind her head, "If it's about this, then you need not be worried."

I wasn't convinced by Yuan Shu's show of confidence was difficult but I did not say anything to this, and decided to wait and see what she would do later.

After walking for a while more and crossing 2 large halls, we finally reached the inner most room where Yuan Shao awaited us.

"My lord, Yuan Shu, General of the Left, and Liu Bei's retainer have arrived."

"Oh, my little sister is here. Tell them to come in."

The retainer bowed and gestured with his head to enter before leaving.

Isn't it common courtesy for one come out to welcome one's visitors? Even if she doesn't respect my lord, doesn't she care about her own little sister?"

"Come on, let's go in." Yuan Shu said with a tinge of joy and went ahead. I looked at Yuan Shu who didn't seem to mind and felt a little sad for her.

After a few flights of stairs, we made it into her room. I looked around silently, and found that whether it was the shelves or the tables, they were all covered with heaps of treasure. The amount in this room was so much that all of Xu state could not hope to compare. It has been said that Hebei was a place rich with many treasures but now I see that it is no exaggeration.

"Big sis~~" Yuan Shu called out and charged for the figure on the right. I turned and saw a noble lady with flowing long wavy hair wearing exquisite clothing made from silk and satin. When she saw Yuan Shu running over, she put

down the teacup in her hands and hugged Yuan Shu who leapt into her arms.

“Aiyo~~ My dear little sister~~” Yuan Shu showed a difficult expression as she rubbed Yuan Shu’s hair and then sniffed her little sister before continuing, “It’s been difficult on you this time huh~~”

“No, it’s nothing. I’ll just take it as experiencing how it’s like to live as an ordinary civilian.” Yuan Shu said as she separated from Yuan Shao, before continuing with an awkward expression, “I don’t have anywhere else to go now, and can only find shelter with big sister.”

“I told you long ago that you should have just stayed with me but you wouldn’t listen.” Yuan Shao said with a helpless smile, before continuing with a kind expression, “Don’t leave me again this time.”

Un?

Why does the feeling that Yuan Shao give me feel so different before... She feels a lot warmer a person. Is it a psychological effect?

“But I really have to be thankful to Liu Yu Zhou huh~~” All of a sudden, Yuan Shao changed the topic and pointed at me as she continued, “If it weren’t for Liu Bei, my little sister would have died on the way here.”

“...” Yuan Shao clearly meant more than what her words seemed to suggest on the surface, and I was at a loss as to what to reply. I took a deep breath, and bowed before replying, “Your little sister is a good person and her life should not end. My lord is also benevolent and deeply respects Lord Yuan Shao, and thus, he has sent me to accompany your little sister on her journey here.”

“That does sound reasonable,” Yuan Shao said as she got up and walked over to where I was, “But if he respects me so deeply, why would he attack my little sister?”

“... My lord was only following the orders of the Son of Heaven of the Great Han. As Imperial Uncle of the Great Han, my lord has no reason not to abide by those orders.”

“From what I can see, Liu Bei is not a loyal servant of the Great Han, but a lackey of Cao Cao’s right?”

“Big sister...”

“Don’t interrupt.” Yuan Shao cut off Yuan Shu’s words and walked over to my side and looked at me with a cold glance as she continued, “I don’t know what Liu Bei sent you here for, but I have no intention of joining with someone who has thrashed my little sister.”

I didn’t think that Yuan Shao would be this sharp. Lord Yuan Shu, I don’t see how I shouldn’t have been worried.

“... Is that so. Then if I were to say that,” I met her glance, “I were here to convince Lord Yuan Shao to attack Cao Cao, what would you do?”

Attack, Cao Cao.

When these 3 words reached Yuan Shao’s ears, I saw her eyes widen slightly.

“Haha,” She then laughed as she replied, “You really know how joke huh. Liu Bei is Cao Cao’s ally, for what reason would he oppose Cao Cao?”

“My lord has had some differences with Cao Cao recently, and before long, the Cao army will be sieging the walls of Xu state city.”

“Oh? There’s actually such a thing huh.” Yuan Shao played with her hair as she put on a smile once more and sat back down on her chair. “Then what you mean is to...”

Yuan Shao was clearly moved. To her, the greatest hindrance to her ascendancy is Cao Cao so all I need to do is continue along this thread.

As I thought about this, I stood up straight and deeply bowed before saying the purpose of my visit, “... An alliance with Liu Bei, against Cao Cao.”

Meng De POV

“All preparations have been made. All that’s left is for my lord to lead the main body.” Xun Yu spoke to me during lunch, from some random corner.

“Has there been any movement by Yuan Shao?” I continued eating as I asked her.

“Yuan Shao moved the bulk of her troops to the border of Bing state and Ji state 2 months ago. There have been no movements since then.”

“How many troops have we gathered?”

“About 50,000 or so.”

“And Yuan Shao?”

“A rough estimate puts her army at 200,000 strong, excluding reinforcements from Xianbei and Wuhuan.”

(TL: Xianbei and Wuhuan are places where the nomadic Mongolian tribes are. The Han Chinese typically considered them as barbarians.)

When I heard this, I couldn’t help but to put down my chopsticks and take a swig from my gourd of wine.

1 to 4 huh...

“Imperial Chancellor!”

Un?

Just then, a middle aged man barged in from outside. He wore the official uniform very properly, and was the perfect exemplar of a Han dynasty official.

“Oh~~ Isn’t this Kong Rong? How is it? Have you gotten used to life in Xuchang?”

Kong Rong, Administrator of Beihai, is a famous scholar. His way of thinking is somewhat outdated but leaving him in Beihai would be a waste of his talent so I got the Son of Heaven to summon him to the capital and serve as Palace Counsellor.

“I heard that Imperial Chancellor wishes to attack Yuan Shao?” He did not bother with niceties or greetings, and cut to the chase anxiously.

“Un, that’s right. I did say that in morning Court.” I gestured with my hands as I said so, “Please sit sir, if you have anything to discuss, we can do so at length.”

(TL: By sir, it’s more of like a title. *E.g.* you call professors by professor.)

“There is no need for that.” He saluted before continuing.

“Please pardon my directness but I think it would be better to seek peace with Yuan Shao.”

"Oh? Peace?"

"Yes." He straightened his back and began explaining, "Yuan Shao now occupies a large swathe of territory that covers Hebei and Liaodong, and is the bulwark against Xianbei, Wuhuan and Gaoli. If external powers seize the opportunity while we are embroiled in civil war, then that would be disastrous. Moreover, Yuan Shao belongs to the family that held the 3 principal appointments for 4 generations. Yuan Shao herself is loyal to the Son of Heaven. I'm afraid Imperial Chancellor has no legitimate reason for your attack on her."

(TL: Gaoli is the Chinese name for Korea, which was in the Goryeo dynasty then.)

As Kong Rong said so, he walked toward me and his expression grew more severe with every step.

"That's right, what sir has said is all correct." I laughed as I clapped. "But though Yuan Shao is but a mere Governor of Ji state, why has she become the Grand Commandant of 4 states? If she is loyal to the Son of Heaven, why has she not come to see the Son of Heaven at all in Xuchang?"

"This..."

"Sir, I'm sure you and I know what this all means." I waved and summoned the 2 servants outside, which gave Kong Rong a fright. Only when he saw that they came in to clear my lunch did he heave a sigh of relief. "In this chaotic era, the only ones who are truly loyal to the Han are but 2 individuals. And of them, neither are Yuan Shao or Sun Ce."

"... Alright, I'll stop being a wet blanket to Imperial Chancellor." Kong Rong seems to have been convinced, but he sighed and continued again slowly, "But how does Imperial Chancellor intend to fight this battle? Whether its troops, logistics, or morale, there is not one area in which you have an advantage in."

His words were on point this time, and were things which I was worried about as well.

I clenched my fist. "I've made arrangements for all of these issues. Sir need not worry, I will end this swiftly."

That's right, this battle with Yuan Shao cannot drag on, it must end as swiftly

as possible.

Only after Kong Rong left did I lower my guard. As a scholar, his skill at debate is top notch indeed. If I am not careful enough, I could find myself convinced by him.

But, 1 to 4 huh...

"Is Xun Yu still around?"

"... Yes."

"Tell me, are Yuan Shao's strategists more outstanding than mine? Are her warrior generals braver than mine?"

After a moment of silence, Xun Yu began speaking in a rare, uncharacteristic tone that was filled with scorn. "Our armies are far superior to Yuan Shao's. Tian Feng is strong but rebellious, Xu You is ambitious but unintelligent, Shen Pei is knowledgeable but ingenuous, Feng Ji is determined but useless. Yan Liang is ferocious but brainless, Wen Chou is brave but naive, and the rest are ordinary people. The ones who are truly talented are former subordinate generals of Han Fu and Zhang Yang who will not die for Yuan Shao."

When Xun Yu finished, I burst into laughter.

"But my lord," Xun Yu interrupted, and emerged from behind a flower vase and sat beside me, "You said there were 2 people loyal to the Han. Who is the other one besides my lord?"

"That's right, who indeed?"

"My lord!"

"Haha~~"

Going by a rough estimate, Wang Zhong and Liu Dai should have reached by now.

Liu Bei POV

So the ones who should come, came in the end anyway.

"Big brother."

"Ah, I know." I stood on the Xu state city walls with my 2 little sisters and looked at the army that came from afar. On its flags, one could clearly see the '曹' emblazoned.

Even if it was a misunderstanding, must the friends of yesterday be the enemies of today?

My heart ached once again.

Chapter 5: Don't tell me this is the capture of Wang by the second sister

TL: Quite a few new characters. Short chapters ahead but a lot of development, in various ways.

Yuan Shao POV

Shiku.

I took a sip of tea and rolled my sore shoulders.

Just saying some words was enough to tire me.

Right now, I was sitting in the Grand Commandant's seat in the main hall.

My Grand Commandant seat has been specially made to be taller than the other seats by several levels. And I sat atop the seat and looked down on my retainers as always.

I told everyone what happened yesterday and hopes to hear their views.

"We understand what happened," Tian Feng, who sat at the front of all my retainers, said as she nodded. She had a prim and proper ponytail as always, and sat up straight with her hands on her thighs, "Then did my lord agree to it?"

"How could I?" I elegantly waved, "Though I feel that this is a good chance, I still think I should discuss this with everyone first."

"My lord is truly wise!" Feng Ji, who was wearing a black robe, hurriedly continued after me, "My lord is peerless in battle, kind beyond comparison, matchless in strategy and has unrivalled bravery. This is a rare opportunity to put an end to Cao Cao. We should send our forces across Baima and make a beeline for Xuchang."

"Hm hm, I know that even without you telling me." I said as I puffed my chest out proudly.

— An alliance with Liu Bei, against Cao Cao.

To be honest, I was indeed convinced then. I'd wanted to defeat Cao Cao long

ago when she held sway over the Son of Heaven. If it weren't for the fact that I hadn't yet controlled Hebei, the world wouldn't be under Cao Cao's control.

As I thought so, I looked at Tian Feng's sourpuss face and felt that I should have listened to her then.

But you can't really blame me for that. Who asked her to have such a wooden face? If she could be more like Feng Ji, I wouldn't flare up at her so much.

"We've been constantly at war and this has drained our civilians and emptied our stores. I don't think we should face Cao Cao head on at this stage." Just then, the irritating Tian Feng began speaking again, "Latest intel shows that Cao Cao's army has gathered at Ying river already. If they are that rushed, I believe their armaments and supplies have not been adequately prepared. We now hold the defender's advantage and should station garrisons at Liyang, Henei and each state's borders as we wait for them to attack first. Within a year, the Cao army will definitely collapse. When the time comes, all we have to do is send an envoy to welcome the Son of Heaven into our territory. And should Cao Cao try to stop us, we have legitimate reason to march our troops into the capital. By then, Cao Cao will have lost the support of the people as well and will be no more."

A year... It was indeed a good plan but this was...

"There's no need to waste so much time right?" Shen Pei, who was sitting beside Feng Ji, said as she looked at me before smiling at Tian Feng, "Our lord now occupies He ei and our troops heavily outnumber the Cao army manifold. What difference will there be between attacking Cao Cao and attacking the likes of Han Fu and Zhang Yang?"

"Shen Pei, you!"

"They are different. Cao Cao is not the sort who acts without thinking." Ju Shou said quietly to Shen Pei as she hurriedly held back the agitated Tian Feng. "The key to victory does not lay in numbers but strategy and tactics. Cao Cao is intelligent and there are no shortage of strategists and warrior generals under her. Our army can easily defeat Cao Cao but if we launch a large scale attack, the outcome is unpredictable. Moreover, we don't have a legitimate reason to attack right?"

"Liu Bei is the Imperial Uncle and is now under attack by a Court official. As

Court officials of the Great Han, saving the legitimate descendants of the Great Han is our duty. Is that not reason enough?"

They're still fighting...

I yawned in irritation nf began to feel like it was a waste of time to discuss this with them. What made me even more angry was how they always used words I couldn't quite understand.

... In that case, I can only resort to the method I used when we attacked Dong Zhuo.

"Silence!" I called out as I elegantly waved. Only when they heard me did they sit back down quietly, "I've heard many suggestions from all of you and feel that they all deserve some merit. In short, there are 2 schools of thought, a battle of attrition or a head-on collision right?"

Shen Pei and Feng Ji smiled as they nodded, and Tian Feng and Ju Shou did not raise any objections either.

Good.

I took out a bronze box and opened a hole at the top.

"I have 2 pieces of silk in this box, 1 has a circle drawn on it, the other has a cross." I then shook the box before continuing, "Now, the cross shall symbolise attrition while a circle symbolises collision. I will now take one out from inside and our course of action shall be what is chosen. What do you all think? It's fair to everyone."

"My lord, how can we use such a childish method for such an important matter..."

"This is not a game, but a mandate from Heaven!" I interrupted Tian Feng's displeased voice and pointed her nose as I continued, "It will be Heaven who decides and Heaven is always right. And we will do whatever Heaven wants us to."

Tian Feng still had more to say but she did not speak and only hesitated for a moment before turning her face away.

Hmph, this fellow.

"Alright, let us now see what Heaven has in store for us." I reached my hand in and pulled out a piece of silk as I said so.

— A circle was drawn on the silk.

"Hu~~~" After deploying the troops and generals, everyone left, and I could finally relax.

"My lord."

"Ah, it's Feng Ji." Feng Ji, who was wearing her black robes and a tall official hat as always, came strolling back and I smiled, "Feng Ji, that move of yours is truly effective."

I took out the box from before and extracted the 2 pieces of silk. Both had circles on them.

"My lord exaggerates," Feng Ji smiled as she bowed deeply, "If it weren't for this, Tian Feng and the rest would have went on and on."

"That's right, this thing is truly the perfect solution to resolving differences between lords and retainers. Kekeke." I covered my mouth as I laughed gracefully, "How about it, I'll leave the command of the army to you and Shen Pei. Do a good job."

"Ah, your servant hears and obeys." Feng Ji was clearly over the moon when she heard this but she still suppressed her joy and offered gratitude.

As soon as she was done, she half ran out of the room. The reason why she came back was probably to secure that appointment. I giggled when I thought of this. I have known for a while that Feng Ji is a greedy fellow. But on the other hand, she is a good subordinate.

At the very least, she always knows what I'm thinking. She knows that I intend on facing Cao Cao head on. This is the sort of person I need. In future when I ascend to greater positions, this sort of subordinate won't become a dangerous element.

"Speaking of which, my lord."

"Un? What else is there Feng Ji?" I asked, curious as to why she came back.

"My lord has a just reason for attacking Cao Cao and should denounce her publicly." Feng Ji said before bowing, "Secretary Chen Lin has good literary skills. I believe Chen Lin can fulfill this responsibility."

Denouncing huh... It's a good idea. But...

"No need," I waved my sleeve as I stood up, "Cao Cao isn't the sort who will be perturbed by this sort of thing. And I intend on having a fair and proper showdown with Cao Cao."

As I said so, I walked down the steps and went into the inner room. My fists were clenched as I was more heated up than ever before.

Cao Cao, I've never been able to best you at anything since we were kids. But now, I will prove that I'm stronger than you.

You will soon taste how sharp my sword is.

Liu Bei POV

The march of time was gradual and by the time I sensed the passage of time, it was already the beginning of winter.

Dark clouds covered the sky, the streets were devoid of people and the fields were empty. Even the yellowing leaves that lay everywhere were now a part of the soil.

Even though there's no weather report on this era, I am more or less sure that the first snow of winter will come soon. And this will be the first snow for me since I've come to this era.

And with this snow came Meng De's troops which are camped out not too far away from the city.

Meng De have you really come? Am I that unworthy of your trust? Or have I become a hindrance to your ambitions which must be removed now?

"Are Yuan Shao's troops still staying put?" I asked as I looked with despair at the columns of smoke out in the wilderness as I held the city walls.

"Imperial Uncle, from Lord Sun Qian's message, Yuan Shao has agreed to an alliance but her strategists have differing views and Yuan Shao herself intends on

maintaining the status quo for the time being and observe the situation so it will be difficult to expect reinforcements.” Chen Deng Chen Yuan Long, who was standing behind me, replied respectfully.

I bore the words in mind as I turned and looked at the man who was old enough to be my elder brother and nodded.

I understand the situation but I’m still anxious. How can I hope to resist Meng De with the army I have in this city?

“... Imperial Uncle need not worry.” Chen Deng seemed to have seen that I was anxious and smiled as he looked at me with knowing eyes, “From what I can see, those flags are just an act.”

“Eh?”

An act?

“The Imperial Chancellor is a devious one, and would no doubt concentrate her forces on Yuan Shao. At the same time, she knows that Imperial Uncle is not easy to deal with and so she has done this to ensure that your actions are limited.”

“Is that really the case...”

“Of course, this is just a conjecture of mine. Perhaps Imperial Uncle is seen even more highly by the Imperial Chancellor.”

Eh? What does that mean? I asked Chen Deng, but he only smiled in response.

“I am Wang Zhong, the Imperial Chancellor’s General Who Manifests Firmness, and I demand the traitor Liu Bei to open the city and surrender immediately!!”

The shout from outside was so unbelievably loud that it could be heard from this meeting room on the other side of Xu state city.

And Yun Chang and Yi De, were currently in the meeting room discussing strategies for the upcoming battles.

“What is that bastard shouting for? I’ll show him...” Yi De began rolling up her sleeves when she heard the shout.

“Don’t be so agitated little sister. You’re only letting the enemy get to you.” Yun Chang said as she pressed down on Yi De’s tiny head before turning to me

and wrapping up our discussions, “So that is to say that we are not yet clear whether Lord Cao Cao is in this vanguard troop?”

“Un, so I was thinking about letting one of you go and ascertain the truth.”

“Little sister is willing to go!”

“Overruled, Yun Chang, you go.”

“Then why did big brother even ask! Do you not trust me? Even if it’s Lord Cao Cao, I’ll capture her anyway!”

It’s because you’re like that that I can’t trust you~~~

“Un, I’ll go this time then.” Yun Chang said as she swept up the Green Dragon Crescent Blade and stood up.

“Yun Chang, this is a request from me. Don’t injure too much.”

“Don’t worry big brother. I’ll take care of myself.” Yun Chang gave a refreshing smile and flicked her red glossy hair before walking out.

Yun Chang, you got it wrong... Don’t injure Wang Zhong too much.

Yun Chang POV

I exited the meeting room and sprinted to our barracks and randomly picked out 3,000 men to meet the enemy with.

“Open the gates!!!” Along with the yell of the general atop the city walls, the Xu state city gates slowly opened and the face of the enemy appeared before me.

I can’t let down big brother’s trust in me. However, I’m worried that my skills may have gotten rusty from a lack of challenging battles in a long while.

I led the troops out of the city and realised that snow had begun falling.

The snowfall was not heavy but it floated down uniformly and chaotically, creating a picturesque wintry landscape. It landed on my red hair, on the back of the horse and on my blade. It did not feel unpleasant, rather it helped soothe my mood and made me feel comfortable.

“I am Wang Zhong, General of the Household, who dares meet my challenge?”

When the warrior saw me exit the city, he raised his broadsword and reported his name. At such basic courtesy shown to me, I felt I should reply appropriately. “I am Guan Yu Guan Yun Chang, and I am here under orders to meet you in battle.”

“Oh? So you’re one of the 3 who slew Hua Xiong?” He smiled mockingly, and seemed to be taking me lightly, “Now that Sun Jian and Pan Feng are both dead, you are the only left and soon you shall join them.”

At these words, my rage surged endlessly but I was able to suppress it somehow as I replied calmly, “Sun Jian is the Tiger of Jiangdong and a hero of his generation; Pan Feng’s martial skills may have been lacking but he faced death fearlessly and is a good man of which the likes are rarely seen these days. As a mere surrendered general, what right do you have to criticise them?”

“Kuh!” He was now rendered speechless by my retort and yelled out as he charged at me, “You’re just a woman, die!”

Just a woman? ... Looks like he’s a rather prejudiced fellow.

I only sat calmly on my horse and slowly moved toward him as he yelled and charged at me.

“Waa!!!” He charged up to where he was just 5 paces away from me before swinging his broadsword down on my head.

But no matter how lethal a move may be, a slow move is a slow move.

I focused my senses and raised the bloodlust that had remained dormant in me for a long while now as I raised my glaive—

“Haa!!” I yelled out as I slashed down diagonally from the right.

I’m not bragging when I say I’m confident in my speed when wielding the Green Dragon Crescent Blade.

And the ferocity of the slash made him flinch in fear and the blade he swung out turned into a defending block instead.

Hmph! Looks like it’s over.

I moved my hand at the front to the back and put force into my blade as it pressed down onto Wang Zhong’s weapon—

“Yaa!!!”

“Kuh– Wa, waa!!!” Along with a cry from the horse, Wang Zhong fell to the ground along with the horse.

“D, damn it– Wu!” He tried to stand, but my blade was at his neck.

“...” I stood like that for moment before pulling blade back and used it to carry him by his armor. He did not resist, which saved me a great deal of trouble and I turned back and yelled at his troops which were at a loss as to what to do, “Listen well, return and tell Lord Cao Cao that her Wang Zhong has been captured alive by Guan Yu!”

The enemy troops before me had already begun retreating and I wonder if they heard what I just said.

Chapter 6: Don't tell me this is the capture of Liu by Yi De (1)

Liu Bei POV

"Big brother! I brought Wang Zhong back!"

I was anxiously waiting in the meeting room when I heard Yun Chang's clear and firm voice.

She brought what back now?

I was so shocked at this sudden development that happened in less than 2 hours that I spilled my tea all over me. Of course, this wasn't on purpose.

Just as I was about to wipe my clothes, Yun Chang's appeared at the door. Another despondent looking figure hanging from the blade in her hands also appeared.

"Oh?! Yun Chang's back already~" I exclaimed as I put down the cloth in my hands and quickly stood up, "Come in, have a seat and rest up."

"I'm fine, it was only one bout." Yun Chang said relaxedly, her breathing perfectly level, "Where is our little sister?"

"She got hungry and went to find something to eat."

"Eh, she's so gluttonous." Yun Chang said as she smiled helplessly, "Look big brother, I did as you said and brought this back to big brother alive."

As she said so, she flicked the blade with her slim arms and the despondent figure somersaulted in the air before landing on the ground.

"Oh~~~ Looks like giving you this mission was the right decision as expected." I sighed in admiration before squatting down and began to interrogate Wang Zhong.

Ah, this male general's fighting spirit seems to be completely depleted.

Even though she's a woman... Even though she's a woman...

For some reason he was muttering this repeatedly.

I don't know what happened but it looks like he underestimated Yun Chang...
Hai, what a pitiful fellow.

"Ah! Big sister, you brought him back already?!" Just then, Yi De came running in from outside with buns in her hands, "You're so quick, but that's to be expected of big sister~~"

"No way~~~ It's not me that's too strong but him that's too weak." Yun Chang said as she nonchalantly sighed and placed her Green Dragon Crescent Blade on the table before pouring herself some tea.

I pulled up the guy called Wang Zhong and threw him onto a chair before shaking his shoulders lightly to awaken him.

"Oi oi!"

"Ah... Ah? This is..."

Looks like he's back.

"This is Xu state city, Yun Chang brought you back when you lost consciousness."

"Ah ah, is that so." Only after he heard this did he finally accept the reality before him and he continued as he shook his head, "It all went as the Imperial Chancellor predicted, I am indeed not your match."

Un?

"Is Meng De... The Imperial Chancellor here?"

"Ah, no. The Imperial Chancellor isn't here."

I'd thought he would refuse to answer me, or lie, but who knew that he would be so forthright and honest. Wait, could it be that what he just said is a lie?

"If she's not here to personally lead it, then why are you bearing the Imperial Chancellor's flags?"

Hai. He sighed once more and smiled self-deprecatingly, "The Imperial Chancellor did plan on leading the punitive force herself but her priorities lay with Yuan Shao so we were sent here first as a bluff."

... Everything was as Chen Deng predicted.

"Then does Lord Cao Cao know the truth about Che Zhou?" Yun Chang quickly added on, "Does she know we have no intention of opposing her?"

"..."

Wang Zhong sat there wordlessly and did not reply Yun Chang.

"Oi! Say something will you! You useless piece of crap!" Yi De couldn't take it and grabbed Wang Zhong's armour with one hand and actually ripped his armour off.

This made him panic and he didn't dare to stay mum any longer. "Th, the Imperial Chancellor has a message for you but until you capture I and Liu Dai, I cannot divulge it! — Ah!"

He flailed about as he tried to break free from Yi De's grip but this was impossible and he ended up being singlehandedly flung away by Yi De.

From what he said, looks like they're actually here to bring a message from Meng De. But I can only receive it after capturing them both.

"Take him away and lock him up first." I waved my hands as I gave the order to the soldiers outside the room.

Only until Wang Zhong was dragged out did I finally relax as I sat down in the room.

Looks like there's hope for reconciliation... Honestly, I really don't want to be enemies with Meng De.

For both official and personal reasons.

"Big brother, leave the matter with Liu Dai to me." All of a sudden, Yi De's small face appeared before me. Her serious expression was both cute and convincing.

"No can do," I waved my hand tiredly, "You heard what Wang Zhong said right. Only if we capture Liu Dai alive will we be able to get the message by Meng De. On top of that, Liu Dai will be a lot more cautious now that Wang Zhong has been captured."

"I understand what big brother means," Yi De said as she closed her eyes and placed her hands on her temple. She sank into silence and slowly opened her

eyes as she continued, “Don’t worry big brother, I’ll use my brain this time.”

(TL: Bankai!)

I was greatly surprised to see wisdom in Yi De’s eyes and I looked at Yun Chang and saw that she smiled and nodded instead of opposing this time.

“... Alright, I’ll leave this one to you Yi De.”

“I understand big brother.” Yi De said calmly instead of giving a loud declaration as usual and respectfully bowed before leaving the room.

Yi De’s back seemed like an intellectual rather than a warrior this time.

Chapter 7: Don't tell me this is the capture of Liu by Yi De (2)

Yi De POV

Ha~~~~~ Hu~~~~~ I gripped the Serpent Spear in my hands tightly as I breathed in and out. I'd heard before from my family that it was only cold when snow was forming and not when it snowed but I never believed it until today.

On the second day after big sister captured Wang Zhong, I stood before the Xu state city gates once more.

"Must be captured alive." Though big brother was not beside me, I could still hear his words repeated in my head over and over.

"Opening the gates~~~~~" Hearing the message from the people above the city walls, I ordered the troops to step back and then with a dull clunk, the gates began to open up slowly.

What greeted me was a shiny wintry landscape as I whipped my horse.

Yi De understands so don't worry big brother.

Liu Dai did not leave his camp and answer the challenges so I could only bring some coins and bring the confrontation to him.

I ordered my troops to set up camp about 5km away from Liu Dai's camp, and told a subordinate to impersonate me and bring 1,000 troops to his camp and yell and scold him.

Liu Dai doesn't know what I look like of course, so giving him a false impression is definitely useful.

After about an hour, my subordinate returned to camp and reported what happened to me in a helpless tone, "Lord Zhang Fei, the other side defiantly stays in his camp no matter what kind of insults I use."

"Ah, that's fine. Just continue impersonating me for now." I smiled casually as I said so. She seemed to think that it was weird for me to find this outcome favourable but she did not ask further and left soon after.

As expected, that little Liu Dai is afraid of me and does not dare to leave camp.

I took a swig of wine brought from Xuchang— Ha~~ It really is sweet and strong~~~ I wonder if I'll ever get to drink this wine again in future,

“Hai~~ That bastard Liu Dai!” I scolded softly and did my best to prevent myself from taking another swig and lose control.

Yi De, you got to use your brain~~ — Is what I kept saying to myself.

Liu Dai has a numerical advantage so a forceful attack won't work. If I confront him directly, it will be very disadvantageous for my side. So the crux of the matter is how to get Liu Dai to leave his camp and attack me as soon as possible. For him to attack me, he must have 100% confidence in ensuring my defeat. So, the best way is to let him find my weakness.

Liu Dai POV

“Is the one outside still scolding?”

“Report, they've gone back.”

“Remember the face of that general called Zhang Fei. If she ever comes again, we will stay in camp on guard.”

“Yes, sir!” The soldier acknowledged the order and left the tent but I still found it hard to be calm.

“Imperial Chancellor...” I said as I looked at the ‘曹’ flag, and felt both admiration and helplessness for my lord.

I turned and looked at the item the Imperial Chancellor handed to me which was on the table. Speaking as a warrior, I would really prefer not to see this item handed over when the time comes,

“Report!”

“Un?” A military courier ran in frantically and uneasiness assailed me but I kept it down and spoke in a commanding tone, “What is it?”

The military courier corrected his pose and spoke in a clear voice.

— Someone is here to switch camps.

Within a short while, the one who wanted to switch camps came before me.

It was a girl, and when she saw me, she neither kneeled nor did she speak.

“You said you were here to switch camps?”

“Un un, I’m here to surrender.”

She spoke very quickly and after looking at her from up close, I found no bruises or wounds on her body. No matter how I look at it, she doesn’t seem like someone who would surrender to the other side.

Hmph~~~ Zhang Fei has underestimated me a little too much. If you’re going to put on a show, at least choose a good actor.

“You said you were here to switch camps but on what grounds should I believe you.” Perhaps,” I said as I drew the sword at my waist and pointed it at her, “You’re double agent.”

“Hmph, of course you should believe me,” I was surprised to see that not only was she not afraid in the least, she even seemed relaxed as she put her hands behind her head as she continued, “On the grounds that I’m here to give you an opportunity.”

Opportunity?

“What opportunity?” Whatever the case, I should hear what she has to say first.

“I’ll be honest with you, I’m Lord Zhang Fei’s second-in-command. Though Lord Zhang Fei has camped nearby, she has not brought supplies with her and intends on doing so under the cover of night.” She said and then sat down on a chair to the side nonchalantly, “General Liu may seize this opportunity and burn Lord Zhang Fei’s supplies. Lord Zhang Fei will definitely come to save the supplies and then all you need to do is to attack her camp and victory will be yours.”

“Un...” If that was really the case, then that was a plan which could indeed work well.

But can I trust her words? On the other hand, if she were a double agent, why would she walk in from the front and act so high and mighty?

Could she really be here with genuine intent to switch camps...

"Alright, I'll believe you this time," I said as I sheathed my sword, "But that doesn't mean I trust you. You will be assaulting the camp together with me."

By tonight, if what she says is not true and my troops do not find any supply caravans, I can kill her personally on the spot. If what she said is true, then that's good but I can't lower my guard and must keep observing her. If she does anything funny while we're attacking the camp, I can deal with her then as well.

I looked at the girl as I thought so and awaited her reply.

She only smiled confidently as before and said, "No problem."

Chapter 8: Don't tell me this is the capture of Liu by Yi De (3)

Liu Dai POV

Hu~~ Hu~~ As soon as night fell, a loud snore resounded beside me. I wouldn't have believed that a little girl could snore so loudly if I hadn't seen it myself.

And to think the one in a deep sleep was an distrusted betrayer whose life hung in the balance. I really don't understand why she is so fearless.

Ah... Just hearing her makes me feel sleepy. But tonight is one night which I can't afford to slack off.

The troops sent to intercept the supply caravans have been sent out and all I need to do is to wait here for news. As I thought so, I gripped the sword in my hands.

If anything untoward were to happen, I would immediately draw my sword and kill the girl before reorganising my forces and counterattack.

I don't know what kind of person Zhang Fei is but since the Imperial Chancellor said as much of her, I must be prudent and cautious so that I do not repeat Wang Zhong's mistakes.

"Report!!" A military courier came running in from the outside and I immediately felt energised. Even the girl's snot bubble burst as she sat up and rubbed her eyes.

"How was it?!" I stared at him fixedly as my hand that held the sword began trembling uncontrollably.

— The interception was a success! Our troops have secured 10 carriages with supplies.

Yes!!

"I told you so~~" The girl said as she walked over, her face completely at ease.

It really went as she said huh... I couldn't help but to be impressed but now wasn't the time to be feeling impressed.

“Come, you will move out with me.” As I said so, I grabbed the long spear in the tent and charged out.

“Has Zhang Fei’s forces left their camp?” I charged to the entrance of the encampment in one breath and began asking the scouts on the status of Zhang Fei’s forces.

“Ah, we just spotted many torches heading in the direction of Xu state city. Estimates put the size at 3,000.”

3,000? Isn’t that her entire army? This Zhang Fei isn’t much after all. She actually went out to save the caravans even though Xu state city would definitely send help anyway. Not leaving any troops at all to guard their camp is far too careless of her.

“Notify all troops,” I gave out orders as I received the helmet a soldier at the side passed over, “Prepare to take their camp.”

“When we force Zhang Fei’s troops to retreat, I will personally command you in front of the Imperial Chancellor.” I was not leading the bulk of our troops out at a gallop toward Zhang Fei’s camp.

“Oh? Thanks a lot for that, General.” The girl gave a genuine smile. I’d previously doubted her smiles but now I felt that she was truly smiling from the bottom of her heart.

I must achieve victory in this attack. Leaving aside financial gains, being able to dent their troop morale will be a big blow against Liu Bei. When the time comes, all I have to do is to link up with the troops that originally served the Imperial Chancellor and the city will be easily ours.

As I was thinking about my next steps, Zhang Fei’s camp was already in sight.

I whipped my horse as we made a beeline for the camp.

Would there be arrows heading toward us?

I thought there would be at first but we were now only several dozen meters away and there was no movement whatsoever in the surroundings, and I was finally convinced that there were none of Zhang Fei’s troops in the camp.

Just like that, we successfully seized their encampment. Though I don’t feel any

rush from this victory, a win is a win.

"Dismount everyone, and switch their flags for ours," I dismounted first and stuck my spear into the ground as I gave out orders, "Take everything useful with us. 1,000-man generals, bring half of our troops here and attack Zhang Fei's rear guard..."

I only felt at ease after giving out all the orders. And my relief grew as I saw the troops load up the goods onto our carriages.

I, Liu Dai, was once a feudal lord as well. I may serve the Imperial Chancellor now, but I'm still a hero of this era.

"Lass, you really have outdone yourself this time. When we get back to camp, I'll write a recommendation letter for you and have you be my second-in-command." I took off my helmet and sighed as I said so.

... Un?

What is this feeling? ... It feels like everything went too smoothly? Is it just my mind playing tricks on me?

"I apologise," Just then, the lass began speaking and her voice now was severe unlike before, "But I've already chosen the one I want to serve."

Before I could even react, torches suddenly appeared all around us as yells for slaughter sounded from every direction.

What?! Did we fall for a trap?! But these numbers... There are actually 3,000? Did Zhang Fei bring out 6,000 men?

In an instant, my troops descended into chaos. Some died, others ran. None of the 1,000-man generals' orders went through.

As for me, I forgot that I should have commanded my troops to counterattack in that moment as I was consumed by rage.

Damn it!! This fellow was indeed a double agent!

As I thought of this, I grabbed the long spear and whirled as I stabbed at her.

"You!!!" My spear drew closer and closer but she did not make a move and only reached out a single hand and placed it on her chest.

If you don't intend on resisting then die—

But in the next instant, I did not stab through her as I intended. Rather, the front half of my spear disappeared entirely. What was left in my hands was a broken off spear hilt.

"First, I had my subordinate impersonate me so you wouldn't recognise me. Next, I wore the ordinary rank and file uniform and acted as a traitor to enter your camp. Next, I diverted your attention away from the existence of Zhang Fei to the strategy I proposed to you. At the end of the day, you are just an ignorant gambler whose greed lost to reason. And that is how my plan succeeded." From my ears, I could hear that lass's relaxed voice but this time, I could hear an intense energy emanating from it as well, "You still don't know right, that the caravans were just to divert a portion of your forces away, that having the fake Zhang Fei go and save them is to draw you in to attack this camp, and that having an empty camp was to make you divert even more troops away. You probably also don't know that I brought 3,000 troops and 6,000 torches for this expedition."

She said a lot but nothing went into my ears.

But I do know one thing.

"You, you are..."

"Ah, speaking of which, I never did tell you my name right?" She received a long spear that was at odds with her height and looked at me fiercely and proudly as she said her name, "I am Zhang Fei Zhang Yi De of Yan~~~"

(TL: By Yan, she is referring to Yan country of the Warring States era. Zhuo commandery was the intersection of Yan and Zhao countries, of which it is said that many heroes were descendants of these 2 countries whom were proud of this lineage.) (TL: By the way, these captures actually happened in the original as well.)

Chapter 9: Don't tell me this is Meng De's letter

Xuan De POV

"Big brother, a report just came in that little sister is back."

"Ah, I heard it just now too." I said as I dealt with the pile of documents I had to deal with.

Really, ever since the Xu state 3 left, the backlog of administrative work is giving me a greater headache than the threat of Meng De.

"Won't big brother go and welcome her?" Yun Chang asked as she looked outside.

The city seems to be noisier today than it usually is.

"I don't think there's a need to. Since it's Yi De, she'll probably come running over excitedly the moment she returns." I said as I threw down a scroll in frustration, "If we go and welcome her, we might miss each other and that might disappoint Yi De who will probably want to see us as soon as possible."

"Big brother~~~" Just then, Yi De's voice could be heard from afar.

See. I said to Yun Chang with me eyes, who only smiled in response.

Alright, I just hope that Yi De hasn't hurt Liu Dai too badly.

I got up first and Yun Chang followed. Just as I was about to step through the door, a tiny shadow leapt in through the door.

"Big brother, I'm back!~~~~" Before I could even confirm who the shadow belonged to, I was knocked to the ground by its force.

Of course, I don't even need to look to know who it is.

"Welcome back, Yi De." I said as I rubbed her head.

"Un!!" She squealed as she hugged me even tighter.

Yun Chang walked over with a smile and sighed as she put her hands on her hips, "Little sister, how did it go with Liu Dai?"

"Keke," She got up and twirled before showing Yun Chang a 'V' sign, "It was a

great success of course.”

Thereafter she gestured to soldiers outside who brought in a man. I’ve never seen him before but I’m sure this is Liu Dai.

Oh~~~

“What do you think? I’m great aren’t I~~” Yi De smiled widely as she put her hands on her hips.

Liu Dai did not seem to be injured at all apart from looking a little exhausted... This was something truly unexpected.

“Oi oi,” Just like with Wang Zhong, I shook him by the shoulders, “Wake up.”

“Ah... Ah. You must be Liu Bei. I lost magnificently.” He said as he nodded before lowering his head lifelessly as he continued, “I really am unlucky to have met with an opponent with both brain and brawn.”

...

Eh?

I and Yun Chang gasped at the same time and looked at each other in disbelief.

I can understand brawn, but brain?

“Big brother heard it right.” Yi De said as she pointed at her head, “I really used my head this time~~”

... I absolutely must ask her in detail how she defeated Liu Dai. But before that.

“Troops, bring Wang Zhong here.”

“Alright Wang Zhong, all the conditions have been fulfilled.” I said as I pointed at Liu Dai to the left and Wang Zhong to the right. “You 2 have been captured by my little sisters. You should tell me what the Imperial Chancellor has for me.”

Wang Zhong looked at Liu Dai angrily who only gave a helpless look in response. Seeing this, Wang Zhong sighed and took out a piece of silk from his armour and Liu Dai did so as well.

“This is a personal letter from Imperial Chancellor Cao,” Wang Zhong said as he took Liu Dai’s silk and joined them together, “She instructed us to only defend

and not attack the city. Within 3 days, the Imperial Chancellor will send reinforcements after stationing troops against Yuan Shao. She also told us to deliver this letter to Liu Bei should we be captured within these 3 days."

To me?

"What's written on it?" I asked as I received the silk.

"We are only couriers, and have no right to see what's on it." Wang Zhong said and turned his face away.

Un... A letter from Meng De for me huh?

I began to read it slowly. Seems like Meng De knows that I'm not too good at reading as she cut to chase immediately.

[If Xuan De is reading this, then that means you have captured Wang and Liu. At the same time, it also means the troops I'm personally leading are headed for you and should arrive by tomorrow or the next day. Regarding Che Zhou, it could be that Xuan De has a reason for killing her, or perhaps you truly do not wish to oppose me. From my understanding of you, it could be as you said in your last report. But with my subordinates and the big picture in mind, I have no choice but to face you as an enemy.

For some reason, being on opposing sides with you gives me great displeasure. Perhaps it's because our destination is the same even if the paths we take are different. One point that really interests me is who will reach the destination first between you and me.

And so, on a personal level, I may oppose you but I won't let you die. By my calculations I should reach by the 4th of the month at about 03:00 to 04:00. Before then, Xuan De should leave Xu state and head to either Jiangdong or Hebei.

It may be a bit terse to do so, but I shall end the letter here. I don't have much else to say except that I wish the best for us both.]

That was the end of the letter. It had no postscript either. I read it over once more, feeling melancholic as I did so.

Meng De... Is this what it means to be toyed by fate?

Liu Bei and Cao Cao are perhaps existences that were born to be enemies. Even if I was friendly with Meng De, could I not change our fate as enemies?

What a farce.

I shook my head as I thought so.

At the very least, I cannot afford to stop here. As long as I live, there is hope for changing the future.

Even if this is history.

“What’s the date and time now?”

“It’s the 3rd day of the month and about 1-2pm.” That’s really close, “Big brother, what’s written on it?”

I handed the silk to Yun Chang and sighed as I said—

“Time to pack up, we’re leaving soon.”

Chapter 10: Don't tell me this is the night before leaving Xu state

TL: Big plot developments.

Liu Bei POV

Night had fallen and I was beginning to tire but I had to enter the city and give my goodbyes to the civilians. There are probably 10,000 or so households in Xu state city and they were all waiting outside their homes with torches as they waited to speak with me in turn.

I really didn't expect something like this.

I haven't spent all that much time here but I have grown attached to this place and its people. Seeing the civilians line up and give their goodbyes made me feel a profound sadness.

Only now did I understand the complicated expressions of my little sisters before. Yun Chang and Yi De probably did not come along with me as they couldn't bear to see this.

From what I can remember, Liu Bei never returned to this place ever again after leaving. I'm afraid I too, will never see this city once I leave.

As I thought so, I finally shook hands with the last of the civilians and returned.

"Ah, big brother is back." Yi De's vision was extremely good and she spotted my figure as I ascended the building as she lay down on the city walls. I raised my head to meet her glance and waved at her.

"Is that so," Yun Chang walked out of the meeting room when she heard Yi De's holler and flicked her hair as she smiled at me, "How was it? Have you said goodbye to all the civilians?"

As I walked up the building step by step, I didn't say anything and only smiled bitterly in response. Yun Chang and Yi De probably understood how I felt and didn't ask further.

They probably feel the same way after all. Xu state city is probably akin to a home for us. As the first place that accepted Liu Bei, we have many attachments to this place.

"Ah, have the troops been deployed already?" I asked, hoping to alleviate the heavy atmosphere.

"It's all done. The wagons have also been loaded up." As before, Chen Deng's thin voice came from behind me.

"Un, thanks." I said as I turned and bowed toward the heavier and taller youth. "It's a little late to be saying this but thank you and apologies for the trouble in having us here."

"No need for that, Imperial Uncle is old man Tao's benefactor, and ours as well by extension." He said as he bowed respectfully, making me feel at a loss, "If it weren't for my father's weak constitution, we would definitely follow you."

That's right, Chen Deng is not my companion, but he is also not my enemy.

As Chen Deng said so, he made to leave. As I looked at his back, I really couldn't think of words to say to make him stay.

But Yun Chang did, "Come with us along with your father," Yun Chang said as she took a step forward, "Big brother will definitely treat you both well."

Chen Deng stopped and turned as he revealed a rarely seen smile.

"Imperial Uncle's immediate future is uncertain and there will definitely be some rough times ahead. For me, filial piety is the most important and I must think about my father." Chen Deng bowed once more before continuing, "I, Chen Deng, am also not an exceptional talent. Imperial Uncle is virtuous and there will definitely be others who are wiser, more capable and willing to serve you."

Yun Chang seemed to have more to say, but I gave her a glance to tell her not to say anything more. There is no point forcing someone to do something they don't want to after all.

Perhaps Chen Deng feels that he can only achieve the life he wants in Xu state city. In that case, it's not a question of ambition but one of lifestyle.

As I watched Chen Deng disappear into the night, I sighed and smiled, feeling that it was a waste.

“Big brother.”

“Un? — Hot!”

I turned when I heard Yun Chang called me and got a hot jug in my face. When I looked carefully, there was a big ‘酒’ written on a piece of paper stuck on the jug.

“It’s our last night, let’s have some wine,” Yun Chang smiled, with several bowls in her other hand, “It’s already heated up.”

Why are we still drinking when we need to leave at dawn, this will definitely cause problems.

Though I really ought to say that...

“Alright~” Though I really ought to refuse, I still received the bowl.

“Waiii!! I’m so thirsty after not having much wine these few days~~~” Yi De was really elated and took an even bigger jug out from behind her. Looks like she intends on drinking straight from the jug.

Even though we’re all clearly underage... Eh, never mind. As long as we don’t get drunk.

We took our drinks and sat down in the meeting room. Yun Chang poured a bowl for me which I took a sip... Ah, so strong! And so warm~~

“This must be from Xuchang!” This strong, familiar taste is something only Xuchang’s wine has.

“That’s right, we are down to our last 2 jugs,” Yun Chang said as she took a swig herself, “Ha~~ The wine from that place is still the best after all.”

Gudong Gudong...

“Yi De, take it easy. Don’t finish everything now when we’ve only just started.”

“Hahaha~~~” I couldn’t help but laugh as I looked at Yun Chang and Yi De under the influence of alcohol.

I poured myself another bowl and looked at the snowy night lit up by the full

moon as they continued noisily. Tao Qian and Han Fu's faces floated up in my mind, as well as various things that happened in Xu state. Many deep and profound feelings overwhelmed me and I drank to forget them.

Ah~~~ If only the Xu state 3, Feng Xian and Zhang Liao were here to drink as well... If Meng De were here, that would be even better~~

And so, for some reason, the long night seemed to become both enjoyable and endless.

Un...

I opened my eyes and slowly blinked as I stirred and regained consciousness.

Ah, my head hurts. It feels like my head is about to explode.

Where am I?

I looked about and saw that the surroundings resembled my personal room. Speaking of which, this is my room. Eh? How did I end up sleeping on the floor?

What time is it?

I looked outside and saw that it was still very dark out... Looks like it's still early and I can sleep a little more.

... Un?

"Ah!!" I yelled out as cold sweat streamed down as I suddenly remembered something very important.

We need to leave by dawn to get out of here before Meng De reaches Xu state with her troops.

We're late!

What time is it? What time is it now?!

In, in any case I should quickly find Yun Chang and Yi De first...

"Un~~" "Ahen~~"

Eh?

Just a few paces away from me— That is, on my bed, came the peaceful breathing of 2 sleeping girls.

... Don't tell me.

After a short moment of silence, I turned and looked at my bed.

"Ah!~~~~" I yelled out once more.

It was exactly as what I feared. On my bed were 2 naked girls. And they weren't just anyone, it was Yun Chang and Yi De.

"..."

I silently felt my body. As expected, my clothes have left me.

What have I done now?!

Chapter 11: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (3)

TL: Try and guess how the “trouble” ends before reading.

Liu Bei POV

It was very cold now in the beginning of winter and every living being seemed to await the appearance of sun in the early morning. Soon, the sun began revealing its smile as it rose over the mountains and lit up the world.

It was very noisy outside the city but the civilians in the city were still in their dreams. With such silence, even the smallest sounds coming from outside the city could send my heart thumping. And with my ears, I could clearly hear the imminent arrival of Meng De's troops.

But under such precarious circumstances, I was sitting with my little sisters in the meeting room. Apart from Yi De who was trying to start a conversation, no one was thinking about the battle ahead.

Of course, we have worn our clothes by now.

“...”

“...”

“Umm, can you 2 don't remain silent.” Yi De pleaded after trying all morning to get us to talk, before curling up and saying with red cheeks, “W, we did it already so what else is there to think about at this point.”

“Wu!!” Yun Chang's face turned scarlet instantly and she stood up immediately. As she did so, her eyes met mine and she got a shock and squatted on the wooden chair, “Wh, what do you mean we did it already! Isn't that a little too casual!”

“Th, that's right. And we haven't confirmed if I actually did anything right?” I was sleeping on the ground then and I don't have any memories of doing anything...

"Big brother, that's so unmanly of you," Yi De said as she hid her face in her hands, and through the cracks between her fingers, I could sense an undescribable fury, "When we woke up, we were in your room and n, n, naked... How can you still say such things, big brother?"

Geh... This is bad.

I turned and looked at Yun Chang and saw that she covered her face with one hand while she twirled her messy hair with the other and looked lost.

How did it become like this? Did I really lose control after getting drunk?

I shook my head at this but it only worsened my headache.

"I don't care..."

Un?

Just then, Yun Chang, whose head was hung low, spoke in a calm voice.

"I don't care! Big brother should take responsibility right?!" Yun Chang raised her head and looked at me. Her eyes were filled with tears, unlike how stern she usually was, and looked completely like a shy and cute girl of her age.

Eh?!!

I sat there stupefied as I heard what Yun Chang said with a reddened face.

"Yun Chang, calm down first..."

"Un, big sister is right," Yi De seemed to have regained her energy and somersaulted onto the table, "Big brother should take responsibility!"

...

Liu Bei, how would you have handled this situation?

(TL: They did sleep together in the original, but obviously nothing like this happened.)

"..." I lowered my head and sank into silence. I know I can't just wave this away. As a feudal lord and as a man, I know what I have to do. When I realised this, I couldn't help but clench my teeth and put my hands on the table as I said, "Alright."

“Eh?” “Big brother?”

They were surprised at my sudden words and questioning looks appeared.

“What I mean is—” I said resolutely as I placed my hand on my chest, “I will take responsibility and marry the 2 of you.”

In an instant, the room’s air seemed to have solidified. Whether it was me, or my little sisters, we all stood still on the spot.

This went on for a while, until—

“Haa....” Yun Chang suddenly made a weird sound, and the hands which covered her face slid down as she dropped to the ground, “M, marriage?”

“B-b-b-b-b-big brother means to marry us?” Yi De said as her finger pointed at the 3 of us in turn with her eyeballs following suit.

Y, you 2 don’t need to repeat it so many times right.

“D, didn’t you 2 want me to take responsibility?” I was starting to think that my proposal wasn’t the best solution after all and scratched my head in frustration. But now that I think about it, it would be difficult for siblings to marry even if we are only siblings in name, “If you 2 don’t want it, then take it as if I—”

“Ah... No,” Yun Chang shook her head violently when she heard this and waved her hands as well.

“No no, that’s not what we meant.” Yi De looked to the side and covered her small mouth with her similarly small hand, “It’s what we have been wishing for...”

“Un? Yi De, did you say something?”

“No no no, n, nothing at all.”

... Th, this really is strange~~

“Marriage huh...” I turned to look at Yun Chang when I heard her mutter and saw that she had the most blissful smile I had ever seen on her. Yi De was smiling similarly as she looked at Yun Chang as well.

But...

“But we still need to put this aside for now.” I said and stood up as I looked outside, “Meng De’s troops are at our doorstep after all.”

When Chen Deng learnt that we had not yet left, he came over shortly to the meeting room to see us and ask us why we haven’t left. Of course, I couldn’t tell him the real reason and tried to wave it away. Chen Deng seemed to have caught on to something and smiled. He did not ask any further and only asked what we needed.

“Chen Deng, you already sent notice to Feng Xian right.”

“Yes, I sent a courier yesterday afternoon to Xiapi to notify them. By now, they should be on their way to Liyang where Yuan Shao is currently stationed at.”

When I heard this, I felt relieved. Like this, I no longer need to worry about anything else.

It was now difficult for me to escape and I have resolved to fight to the death with Meng De. Feng Xian and Zhang Liao leaving safely is a good thing as there was no need for them to go through this trial with me.

“Please release Wang Zhong and Liu Dai as well.” I said as I handed a letter to Chen Deng, “Let the 2 of them bring this letter to Meng De. It’s my reply to her letter.”

“Eh? Why is big brother releasing those captured fellows?” Yi De and Yun Chang were by now back to normal and Yi De said to me with displeasure.

“Lord Cao Cao deployed them in the vanguard purely for the sake of having them be her messengers.” Yun Chang said as she tidied her hair. She had worn her armour and was now sitting calmly on the chair as she wielded her Green Dragon Crescent Blade.

Yun Chang is right, Meng De’s intent could not be clearer. The sole reason why things became like this is because of me. Logically and emotionally, there is no reason to kill those 2.

“If that’s the case, then why don’t we have them explain things to Lord Cao Cao and ask her to let us go?”

“...” I shook my head silently.

This was something impossible. Even if Meng De wanted to do so, her strategists would not let her act for personal reasons.

I shot Chen Deng a glance and he nodded.

"I understand but Imperial Uncle need not be too pessimistic." Chen Deng said and got up before bowing and revealed a scheming look, "Escape may be difficult, but it's not impossible."

Chapter 12: Don't tell me a battle is imminent

Sun Qian POV

After staying in Nanpi for some time, I heard news that Lord Cao Cao was personally leading troops to Xu state. I couldn't sit around any longer and rushed to find Yuan Shao.

But when I reached her mansion, I realised that I couldn't find her directly.

If I were to do so, I would very likely be rejected right off the bat by Yuan Shao for a variety of reasons. And if I were to be rejected outright, there is no way for me to turn the situation around.

After pacing in front of the door for a while, I turned on my heel and headed to another mansion.

"... Please help me deliver a message. Tell Lord Tian Feng that Liu Bei's retainer is here to seek an audience with her." I said as I wiped the sweat off my brow and respectfully bowed to the guard.

The guard grunted in affirmation and went in. After a long while, Tian Feng came out and met me.

"... Ah, Lord Tian Feng." I bowed once more when I saw her.

"No need for pleasantries. Just say what you want, I don't have all day." Tian Feng said and waited for me to speak. I was a little slow to continue but she flicked her hair back and cut me off just when I was about to reply, "Alright, I know what you want to say even if you don't say it. You want me to push a case for Imperial Uncle Liu to my lord right?"

As expected of Yuan Shao's top strategist, she guessed it immediately. But her rude and blunt attitude is... No wonder she doesn't earn Yuan Shao's favour.

"... That is what I'm here for. My lord is presently in great peril and I beseech Tian Yuan Hao to help me and my lord." But even if her attitude was poor, I must lower my head and beg for her assistance. And it's not like I dislike such an attitude to begin with. Rather, I admire it.

Tian Feng walked down the steps and stood beside me with her hands behind her back, her face showing a serious expression.

"Though I have no intention of helping my lord, I did intend on going over to my lord to discuss something related to this." Tian Feng said and began walking without looking at me, "Come along with me. Perhaps my plan to 'Besiege Wei to rescue Zhao' might save your lord."

(TL: Besiege Wei to rescue Zhao is 1 of 36 strategems by Sun Tzu. It was based on an event in the Warring States era when the Qi army assaulted Wei to save Zhao.)

"Oh? You're saying I should launch a surprise attack on Xuchang?" Yuan Shao said tiredly.

I was now before Yuan Shao, with Tian Feng, who was in a bedraggled state. Her proud wavy hair was messy and uncombed and her clothing was dishevelled to the point where it seemed like her twin peaks on her chest would reveal themselves anytime in a wardrobe malfunction.

I touched my breasts and sighed mentally. Leaving aside my breasts, what's with Yuan Shao? Why is she so exhausted?

"That is what I'm proposing. Cao Meng De is now headed east for Liu Bei, Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan are currently engaged in logistical and deployment matters. The only one left in Xuchang is Cheng Yu. This is an opportune moment for us to send our troops into Xuchang in the name of supporting the Imperial Uncle and having an audience with the Son of Heaven. I beseech my lord not to let this opportunity slip by!" Tian Feng said flowingly in one go but from my perspective, it didn't seem like Yuan Shao was paying attention to Tian Feng.

Tian Feng seemed to realise this as well after she finished, "My lord... Could you be having trouble with even more important matters?"

Yuan Shao sighed loudly when she heard this, "Tian Feng, how long have you been with me?"

"About 3 years or so."

"Have you ever heard of any of my relatives by the names of Yuan Tan, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang?"

(TL: These 3 are Yuan Shao's sons in the original.)

"..." Tian Feng held her chin as she sank into thought, "No, no impression at all."

"I thought so as well... But why they have to come today?" Yuan Shao put her palms together as she frowned, "But when I checked my family tree, I actually found the names of these 3. Isn't this..."

"Is that so... But, is this matter important at all?"

Wu!

Tian Feng's blunt words made me sense danger and I looked at Yuan Shao to see that she had an expression that oozed hatred directed at Tian Feng.

The only one who didn't notice was Tian Feng herself.

"Please pardon my straightforwardness, but if these people start by talking about their relations, they are definitely unremarkable people and should not be given important roles. My lord need only assign them to some inspector appointments with no real power. I really don't understand what there is to be troubled about."

Though I don't know Yuan Shao very well, I know that she places a lot of emphasis on face and appearances. She will thus, give a grand welcome to those of her own clan to the point where she is this exhausted.

And it wasn't that Tian Feng was unaware of this. In fact, she is very clear about it and is telling Yuan Shao there is no need to do so in a blunt manner.

"..." But Yuan Shao was now seething with anger. She looked at me, and then sighed, "Alright I understand what you said. Your suggestion is good but I don't have the mood for it. If I lead our troops in this state, we might be careless so let's leave this aside for now."

"Wh...! My lord!"

"Don't say anymore," Yuan Shao commanded as she slapped her chair, "Leave, Tian Feng."

(TL: In the original, Tian Feng was jailed, and subsequently executed after Yuan Shao's defeat at Guandu for doing this.)

I was still in a bow but I could see tears in Tian Feng's eyes. She was probably frustrated at not being able to convince her lord with her sincerity.

She seemed to know that saying any more was futile and left shortly after.

But I can't leave, not yet. I can only depend on myself not that Tian Feng can't help me.

As I thought about this, I took one step forward. "... Lord Yuan Shao, my lord in Xu state is in grave peril. I implore Lord Yuan Shao to send some reinforcements from Liyang and attack Cao Cao's rearguard while my lord's troops will attack from 3 cities: Xu state, Xiaopei and Xiapi. If we attack from all directions, Cao Cao's army will definitely be soundly defeated."

"And how many troops does Liu Bei have?" Yuan Shao only laughed at what I said, "Cao Cao will definitely bring her strongest troops to Xu state. Even if we make it in time, it will be difficult to say if your troops are sufficient and able enough to coordinate a joint attack. I will not take such a big risk."

"... My troops may be few but we can definitely do it!" My half closed eyes were now wide open and I was now looking at Yuan Shao with rage unwittingly, "... Could it be that the great Yuan Shao is afraid she will lose?"

"Don't bother saying anymore," But my words did not reach her, "Go back and tell Imperial Uncle Liu. If he loses Xu state and he has nowhere to go, I, Yuan Shao, will offer him refuge."

Yuan Shao left the main hall once she finished. Seems like she had no intent of listening to me at all.

"..." I got up wordlessly and clenched my teeth as I couldn't think of any solution.

Nonetheless, I must return as soon as possible, to my lord's side.

Even if I will die, I must do so at my lord's side.

Meng De POV

"My lord, the preparations are done and the caravans have arrived. We can attack the city by afternoon."

“...”

“As for manpower, we currently have 6-70,000 troops. Xu Huang’s troops have also arrived.”

“...”

“My lord?”

“Ah, ah?” I hurriedly answered Xun Yu’s voice which came from some corner.

“What’s wrong, my lord? Why do you seem lost?”

“Ah, no. It’s nothing.” I frantically covered my nervous face and turned to walk toward the encampment, “Are Liu Bei and his generals still in the city?”

“They are, but why is my lord asking that?”

“Ah, no... In any case, after we settle the troops, we’re not attacking yet. Tell Xu Chu to be ready and do some reconnaissance on the city and the enemy first.” I was able to reply calmly but my heart was shaken.

Why? Xuan De is still in the city... Could he have some reason why he has not yet left? Or is it...

“My lord!!” “Imperial Chancellor!”

Along with the sound of horse hooves, 2 different voices called out to me. I looked over and saw that it was Wang Zhong and Liu Dai.

“... Xun Yu, get people to attend to them and then tell them to come to my tent.” As I said so, I entered my tent, still puzzled about Xuan De’s actions.

After Wang Zhong and Liu Dai came in, I heard about what happened from them. But all they knew was that the letter had been delivered and they did not know why Xuan De did not leave.

Could it really be that...

“Imperial Chancellor, this is a reply from Liu Bei that he gave us to bring to you.”

Un?

“A reply huh?” I suppressed my emotions and calmly received the silk. I opened

it and saw only one line of snaky words— Since I have not left, the 2 of us— Me and you, need not hold back any more.

I folded the silk over and over into a small square piece after I finished looking it over.

... So it was as I guessed huh. I underestimated Xuan De huh?

The doubts and worries in my heart have disintegrated completely. For some reason, I feel like my heart is closer to Xuan De's despite being enemies with him.

At least, right here and now, what we're thinking is the same thing.

I smiled and kept the silk in my sleeve.

Since Xuan De has chosen to fight, I'll meet him on the battlefield.

Chapter 13: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (4)

TL: Character development~ But this is when the roller coaster goes down again, deeper than before. Death flags, death flags everywhere...

Liu Bei POV

After returning to my room, my heart grew heavy for some reason as I looked at the 2 heavy steel swords on the rack.

There wasn't much time to waste but I still sat on the bed and picked up the fan that I had kept at my bedside and sank into thought.

Who am I?

At the very least, I know I'm not that Liu Bei, and I'm just an ordinary person.

When met with dangerous scenarios, how should a normal person like myself deal with them? What are my responsibilities and how much of a duty do I have to the world? I've come this far just by going with the flow but what is the best way to proceed from now on?

I've always pondered about these problems but I've never been able to reach an answer. Unfortunately, I still don't have an answer nor do I expect to ever find one.

I think that my only choice is to deal with things as they come.

History is cruel and I don't have the confidence I can change its course. But even if all I can do is cause just a small diversion, I want to try.

I put on my armour and hung my swords by my waist before exiting the room, and saw Yun Chang waiting for me outside. I looked at Yun Chang's stern and elegant face and nodded.

"Is big brother ready?"

"Ah, I'm ready." I raised my head and looked at the night sky before nodding once more.

That's right, we are going on the attack.

"Though Imperial Chancellor Cao has surrounded Xu state city, Imperial Uncle can attack the camps on the perimeter under the cover of darkness and break out of the surround." Chen Deng said this afternoon, "But the Imperial Chancellor is a skilled tactician so the success of this plan is up to the heavens."

Un... 50-50 huh... I did not feel confident at all, and unwittingly felt the 2 swords at my waist.

"Where's Yi De?"

"She's already gone over to the troops and started making preparations. Let's go too."

I grunted in reply and followed behind Yun Chang. As I looked at the back of this reliable girl, I couldn't help but feel a deep admiration for her.

At the same time, even under such precarious circumstances, I was still fervently trying to remember what happened the night before. If nothing did happen, then I have nothing to regret. But if I actually did do something and forgot all about it, that would be very regrettable.

"Un? Big brother, did you say something?"

"Ah, ah? No no no, nothing." I hurriedly shook my head in denial. Yun Chang was still puzzled but she did not say anything else.

I felt a little self-hatred. Why was I thinking of such untoward things at this time?

"... Big brother."

"Un?"

"... About, the marriage," Yun Chang did not turn but I could hear her voice quivering.

As expected, even if it's Yun Chang, as a girl, she would definitely be worried about this. Whether anything happened or not, I am at least partially responsible for what happened. This, I cannot deny.

"Ah, I understand." I smiled as I looked at Yun Chang's tall and cutely fidgeting

figure, “We’ll get married once this battle is over.”

“...” Yun Chang’s pace seemed to be much lighter after hearing my words and she replied me with joy in her voice, “Un!”

“Big brother, you’re so slow,” Yi De said as she raised the Serpent Spear on her hands, and quickly gave the command to the soldiers at the city walls to open the gates, “Quickly, while the night is still dark.”

“Oh!” I replied softly, and concentrated on my posture on the horse.

It’s been quite a few days since I’ve ridden a horse and my poor horse riding skills have become poorer still.

There was very little light, as the moon was not out tonight. The night was thus, exceptionally dark and I could not see very far in front of me. The only things I could see were Yun Chang on my left and Yi De on my right.

But that was enough.

Jia!

We called out in unison and the horses neighed and began galloping. In the blink of an eye, we were quite a distance away from Xu state city.

Even though it was very dark, we did not use any torches as it would expose our presence and could only rely in the weak star light to guide us.

Along the way, I found that my psychological defenses were slowly being eroded by the darkness.

This battle would be a difficult one and I might even die here. Needless to say, it would be the same for Yun Chang and Yi De. In that case, I should probably say something to prepare them for what may come.

“Yun Chang, Yi De.” I lowered my head and called out to my little sisters.

“Un?” “Yun Chang is here.”

I looked to my left and to my right and saw that they were smiling at me. It didn’t seem like they were unaware of the situation. Their smiles were those of ones who understood the fate that awaited them and had accepted what may come. And as for me, my nerves calmed down the moment I saw their smiles.

And I changed the words I was about to say, “When we get married, we’ll definitely have to have a grand and exuberant banquet!”

When they heard what I said, the 2 of them looked stunned. But that was only for a moment, as wide smiles with a tinge of shyness soon appeared on their faces.

“Ah... Un, of course we will!” “Ke... Th, though I don’t quite like noisy environments, it’s something you do once in your life after all...”

I smiled as I listened to what they said and continued galloping toward the perimeter camp to the north.

“Charge!!”

Yi De lighted her torch first and yelled out as she charged toward the camp. I and Yun Chang followed behind closely.

But we soon found that there was something wrong.

“Big brother, there isn’t anyone in this camp?!” Yi De said with a frown after running to me as she dispersed the troops throughout this camp.

Damn it! I slapped my head as I couldn’t believe what I was seeing before me. No matter how thin the surround may be, it cannot be this thin.

Kuh! Did we lose the gamble?!

“Yi De, gather the troops immediately. We need to quickly...”

In an instant, yells for slaughter drowned out my words. Within the blink of an eye, troops came from all directions under several flags. A rough gauge put them at several times our size.

And to add to that, they were charging down the 2 hills to the sides of the camp.

As I saw this, I drew my twin swords this time instead of closing my eyes like I did before.

Whatever happens, I will fight today!

Chapter 14: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (5)

Yi De POV

I was swept away and separated from big brother and second sister by the wave of troops that charged down the hills. The difference in numbers was too great and the troops I had left were not even 1,000. Even though this was a situation where I couldn't even ensure my own safety, searching for big brother was my top priority.

If big brother died, what meaning would there be to my life?

"Big brother! Big brother, where are you?" I yelled out as I ran through the encampment, which was by now filled with the Cao army troops, and jumped and stretched, hoping to catch a glimpse of big brother.

Damn it, being short sucks at times like these.

But I kept at it, hoping to find something somehow.

And just as I was poking my head up, a large axe swung down toward my neck without any warning.

Kuh! When did someone come over?

I frantically withdrew my head and swung my Serpent Spear to the side and managed to deflect the large axe away with the blade of my Serpent Spear.

"Who goes there, who dares challenge I, Zhang Fei Zhang Yi De?" I called out as I raised my head. My assailant wore a shiny silver-grey plate that reflected the light from the torches. It shone on her deep eyes that looked like they belonged to a lone wolf in a snowy mountain. I sized her up, and could immediately tell she wasn't any ordinary soldier from her gear and the attack just now, "Looks like you aren't just anyone huh."

If I could, I would prefer not to clash with her here. But if I were to divert my attention away from her at all, my head would instantly separate from my neck.

And so, I have no choice but to deal with her first.

"Since you named yourself, I have no reason not to." She said in a cold voice as she raised her axe and pointed it at me, "I am Major-General Xu Huang, and I hereby challenge you to a duel!"

The moment she finished, she charged at me and smashed her axe at my right with a twirl of her slender arms.

So she's just a second-in-command?

"Don't underestimate me!! I, Yi De, am not someone a mere second-in-command can handle." I did not try and dodge, and swung my Serpent Spear instead. Along with a loud crash, our weapons met head-on and we put even more strength into it but neither was able to knock away the other.

"Ya!!!!!!" I saw that I had a slight upperhand and put in everything I had and deflected her weapon away before stabbing at her head.

Heh!

She dodged my stab, and backed away and corrected her stance before sending waves of heavy slashes at me. Though the large axe seemed cumbersome, I could find no opening between each move and was forced to retreat.

Now I can only try and find a chance—

As I thought so, a long spear suddenly appeared in my eyes and I hurriedly bent back as the spear missed my neck by a hair's breadth.

"40 marks, that's all that dodge of yours was worth." Before I could recover from my shock, the one with the spear at the side said.

"Yue Jin?! ... Ah, or is it Li Dian?"

"It's Yue Jin of course. Man Cheng would never dress as casually as I do." Yue Jin raised her spear and flicked her hair, "And Man Cheng doesn't braid her hair either."

Damn it, now I have to deal with one more? I'm not in the right frame of mind and I now have to deal with attacks from 2 people.

... This is a little troublesome.

Kuh, no choice.

Haa! I yelled out and the 2 immediately got into a guarding stance. I charged over and swung a feint at them. They had lowered their guard as they had a numerical advantage which increased their susceptibility to my feint which confused them.

A chance!

“Everyone!!! Follow my charge!” I turned my horse and brought the several dozen cavalry left with me and charged through the surround led by Yue Jin and Xu Huang.

After a long, hard slog, we finally broke through Cao Cao’s surround completely. But we only realised we were lost after we broke through and didn’t know which direction we should head in.

“Do any of you know where my big brother is?!” I turned and yelled between pants.

Naturally, no one had a reply.

Kuh, what do I do now?

Where is big brother?!

“Everyone, ready your weapons and follow my charge.” I turned the horse again and got ready to charge back in. I turned my head and saw that no one was following my lead, “What are you all...”

“Lord Zhang Fei, it took all we had to break out. The troops are exhausted to the point of death, how are we supposed to charge in again?” A 300-man general said in exasperation, “And Cao Cao’s surround is so expansive, how are we supposed to find Lord Liu Bei in the chaos?”

I stood rooted to the spot, and did not know how to reply him.

... Un...

“Hai!!” I spat out a sigh and stuck my Serpent Spear into the ground in helpless frustration.

Chapter 15: Don't tell me this is the second attack on Xu state (6)

Liu Bei POV

Ah...

I slowly regained my senses after breathing out. When I finally recovered, I realised that my arms were swinging in every which way.

What was going on?!

I hurriedly stopped and looked at my surroundings and at myself under the light of the torches.

I don't have an accurate bio-clock and thus I can't tell how much time has passed since we were attacked. But no matter how much time has passed what filled my eyes were people killing others and people being killed, and what filled my ears were the sounds of slaughter and coarse shouting.

I looked at my arms and saw that they were dyed in blood up to the tip of my blades. I was very clear that, whether or not I was conscious of it, I had killed. And it wasn't just one person.

As I stood there bathed in the light from the torches and soaked in blood, I realised that the twin swords in my hands didn't seem very heavy anymore. My hands have also stopped shaking as well, perhaps from the adrenaline rush.

I felt hot from the heat from the torches and used my sleeves to wipe the sweat off my head but what came off were bloodstains.

Ah... My nearly 10,000 strong force has been completely swept away.

But that's well within expectations since a large portion of them were originally from Meng De's army and turning on us at this time was something natural.

I placed my now-trembling hand on my face and wiped the dust off.

What is it with me? Am I crying?

“I finally found you.”

“Eh?”

A once familiar cold voice came from behind me. I turned and saw a silver line that was aimed at my chest flying toward me.

Wa!

I instinctively stepped back but stumbled to the ground in my panic and my armour was dismantled by the silver line.

“What kind of form is that? I almost want to give you a negative score.” I heard a contemptuous voice as its owner dismounted. As my assailant got closer, I saw that it was a girl with long hair covering one eye, “It’s been a while, Lord Liu Bei.”

“You’re... Li Dian?”

“Oh? Lord Liu Bei has a pretty good memory huh.” She said as she pointed her long spear at my chest that scared me speechless, “Personally speaking, I think highly of Lord Liu Bei. But as a warrior, you are merely an enemy in my eyes on the battlefield. That is what I would consider to be a life worthy of 100 marks.”

That’s it.

Seems like that’s what she means but my ears seemed to have stopped working.

Is this where it all ends for me?

Yun Chang... Yi De...

— We’ll get married once this battle is over.

— When we get married, we’ll definitely have to have a grand and exuberant banquet!

...

I can’t close my eyes. Not now, not yet. There are still things I have to do.

Both official and personal things.

“Ya!!!”

As Li Dian stabbed at my chest, I turned and charged at Li Dian. In that instant,

it felt like something tore my back but that did not stop my charge in the least.

Ya!!!!

"Ah... Ah!"

Perhaps she put all her strength into that stab or perhaps she was surprised by a sudden act from an amateur like me, Li Dian completely lost her balance from my body blow and landed on her back onto the ground.

"Ya!" I was about to swing my sword down but my arm stopped in mid-swing as the death throes I had been hearing up till now came back to me. This made me gave up my intent to kill, "Kuh..."

I swiftly stood up and used highly clumsy movement to mount the striped horse Li Dian was previously on and dug my heels in to make the horse gallop away.

I'd thought Li Dian would keep chasing after me but when I turned back to look, I saw that she stood motionlessly where she was as she looked at me but I could not see what expression she had on.

But never mind about that, what's important is to find Yun Chang and Yi De... Eh?

I swung the horse's reins fervently but the horse did not move as I commanded it to.

Eh?!!!

S-s-s-stop!

No, I have to get off. I need to find Yun Chang and Yi De...

But under these circumstances, I didn't dare to throw myself off the horse and could only let it take me away. I swept my eyes across the battlefield but could not find either Yun Chang or Yi De.

What do I do now?!

It was now late at night and the heat from torches alit in every direction spread throughout my body.

But no one could tell me where to go, nor what to do.

Yun Chang POV

“Haa... Haa... Haa...”

Dun! I stuck the Green Dragon Crescent Blade into the ground and used it to support my drained body.

I looked at the surroundings but it was alit with torches as always. I couldn't find Yi De or Xuan De and it seemed like the few pockets of resistance had disappeared.

Aiya! I cried in my heart as I looked at the troops behind me who numbered less than a hundred.

If I knew this would happen, I wouldn't have tried to fight the enemy on the highlands which had the geographical advantage.

I wiped the sweat on my head and just then, the footsteps of 2 people approaching could be heard.

Again huh... Eh! I put strength into my grip and pulled out the Green Dragon Crescent Blade. I searched for the 2 figures with my hazy glance— It was Xu Huang and Xu Chu.

“Guan Yu has been waiting for you 2 for a while now.” I ruffled my messy hair and looked at the 2 of them who were also visibly tired.

This couldn't be helped after all. They have tried to attack us from all directions 5 times now and I have exchanged almost 100 bouts with them. It wouldn't be strange for them to be tired after all that.

Though it's probably not my place to say that since this is probably...

“Lord Guan Yu, the 2 of us are here not to fight this time.” Xu Huang said with seriousness as she saluted me.

“Thank your lucky stars,” Xu Chu said with her sonorous voice, “Come down quickly, my lord wishes to see you! She has even allowed you to continue bearing arms!”

Un?

See me?

Chapter 16: Don't tell me this is a reunion (1)

Liu Bei POV

It was now the early hours of morning and the moon began peeking out of the clouds, and shone moonlight upon the snowy landscape.

I was still on the same horse which was headed in a direction I knew not where. Its gallop was too quick for my blockheaded self to grasp what the surroundings were.

Every step forward brought great pangs of pain, and the intense gyrations threatened to throw me off. All my limbs were numb by now and I wasn't sure how long more I could last.

And I could feel that there was something very wrong with my back and tried to turn and have a look.

Ouch...

As expected, my back was wounded by Li Dian's spear before. But what was scary was that the burning pain had disappeared and cold dread filled my heart as I realised this.

No good, I'm starting to feel faint.

I used my bloodied hand to rub my eyes and shook my head while I forced my eyes wide open, hoping that would keep me awake.

Yun Chang... Yi De... I couldn't find you all.

And I don't even know if Feng Xian and Zhang Liao made it to Yuan Shao.

Speaking of which how are Hua Tuo, Gan Qing and Mi Zhen doing in Xuchang? Would they be treated poorly? I hope nothing untoward happens to them.

The Xu state 3 were in distant parts of the country now as well. I wonder how they're doing.

As I thought of such things, I buried my head into the horse's mane...

"Ah!"

All of a sudden, a jolt by the horse made me loosen my grip on the reins.

No!!

In an instant, I lost all balance and my legs which were clinging on to the horse finally gave way and I fell off the horse onto my back.

“Kuh!”

It hurts!

I fell heavily onto the dirt road but luckily snowfall had created a decently thick layer of snow that cushioned my fall and I didn’t break any bones.

I gingerly felt my back and an intense wave of pain assaulted me. I looked at my palm and saw that it was covered in fresh blood.

“Haa... Haa...” My breathing grew increasingly ragged and I was starting to suffer from oxygen deprivation.

If I keep on losing blood like this, I’ll probably die.

I lay on the dirt road spread-eagled in a ‘大’ shape, completely drained. There was no living thing all around, only a man about to die from excessive blood loss.

...

Was it just me here now? As I thought so, I took out the feather fan that had accompanied my journey in this era all this while.

I really didn’t think I would die in an era that is over 1,000 years before my birth, how ridiculous is that~~

As I laughed at my predicament, I understood as well. That I was not Liu Bei, and it would not be possible for me to make it as far as he did.

Liu Bei seems to have made it as a king in Yi state in actual history but from all the twists and turns I’ve experienced, it wouldn’t be too strange for me to die here as Liu Bei. Or perhaps, things would work out as long as another person takes my place as Liu Bei.

Just like how I, who is not Liu Bei, am here as Liu Bei.

My consciousness grew hazier as I was thinking about this.

... I'm sorry.

For some reason, I apologised.

And finally, I lost consciousness.

Geh...

A piercing white light shone on my eyelids and I slowly opened my eyes.

It's so glaring.

In the instant when I opened my eyes, I shut them tightly again because of the glare.

Un...

Un? Aren't I supposed to be on a dirt road? This is...

As realisation hit me, I sprang up and tried to look about but fell back down instantly due to an intense wave of pain from my back.

"Don't move about too much, I just applied medicine for you." A familiar female voice came from beside me.

"Ya!" She flicked my forehead and then sank into silence.

"Did you save me?" I asked with my eyes still closed.

"Ah, I found you lying on the dirt road and I dragged you back." The more I heard this girl's voice, the more familiar she seemed. She placed a towel on my forehead as she continued, "This is the inn of Ye city. You can stay here and recover for a few days in peace."

"Ah, thanks for saving me."

"Hahaha, what is there to thank me about?" The girl gave a refreshing yet refined laugh, "My lord has benefitted much from your kindness. It's I who should be thanking you."

Un? Your lord?

"You are..." My eyes were by now accustomed to the light and I slowly opened them and looked at the person before me.

She was wearing a set of curvaceous silver plate, and had taken off her helmet

which revealed a head of beautiful straight golden yellow hair. Her eyelashes were long and proper. Her aura felt like something in between that of Yun Chang and Meng De, noble but resolute, refined but without airs. All this, was the image of a certain person I knew.

— Zi Long?!

Chapter 17: Don't tell me this is a reunion (2)

I slowly got up, and leaned against the bed whilst taking care not to lie on my wound. I shifted my gaze from the ceiling to the wooden door, and then to the window.

Looking outside, I saw that the sky was already dark, even though it was still bright out when I just awoke. Looks like it has been a full day since I've been routed by Meng De.

I wonder if Meng De has sent any men to search for my whereabouts, and how Yun Chang and Yi De are right now.

Try as I might, I couldn't stop thinking about these problems.

"Some wine?" Just then, Zi Long, who had taken off her plate and was now wearing a set of clean white clothing, came over with 2 jugs of wine and gestured for me to take 1, "One should drink when one is wounded."

"Ah, oh, thanks." Wounded huh... Indeed, I have been wounded quite badly. Both physically and emotionally.

I took a swig as I received the jug. This wine was not too strong and rather sweet unlike wine in Xuchang.

Just like in Zhuo county.

"Zi Long, I..."

"No need to say anything, Xuan De. From the rumours floating in the city, I more or less understand what happened." She pressed her finger softly on my lips as she smiled kindly, "Losing under those circumstances is something that can't be helped and you are not to blame whatsoever. There was no strategy or tactic that would have allowed you to overcome the numerical disadvantage."

Looks like Zi Long's tongue is as sharp as always. I know she's trying to comfort me but they cut to the bone. Nevertheless, I can't deny what she said.

"... Speaking of which, why is Zi Long here? Shouldn't you be in Beiping with Bo Gui?"

"Ah... That huh." Zi Long replied and took a sip as she looked out the window before continuing, "I've buried my lord outside Beiping city."

Eh?

"... Un, that's how it is." Zi Long added as she played with the jug in her hands.

It was obvious that she was putting on a show of nonchalance because of my expression of disbelief.

Bo Gui is dead? Just like that? I know what Gongsun Zan's fate was in history but I didn't think she would really...

Hehehe... It only seemed like yesterday that she gave me that silly laugh.

"... How did Bo Gui..."

"My lord and Yuan Shao had a disagreement and it eventually got to the stage where Beiping city was in danger. My lord could have escaped with me but she chose to stay and protect her younger siblings who were too young to survive a harsh escape." She said calmly, and took another sip, "The disparity in strength was too great and the outcome was just as predicted."

I wasn't at the scene, nor have I heard all the details, but I can clearly see the girl with the silly smile and an upright heart in her last moments. Outnumbered she may have been, she still greeted death resolutely.

She died a death fitting of her status as a hero belonging to this era.

But why is it, why can't I cry for Bo Gui even though she's my good friend and even though I feel so sad? Why can't I think of vengeance for her?

Have I grown numb to this era? Or have I accepted the inevitability of death for all?

I really am disgusted at how I've become.

"Zi Long doesn't seem sad at all." I said as I looked at Zi Long, who was drinking calmly, and asked, "You didn't stay with Bo Gui until the very end?"

"Un, I didn't. If it were up to me, I would never have let my lord die there and then."

"That's right." I smiled with difficulty.

"But my lord chose to stay because the city were her roots. She felt that if she lost Beiping city and her family there, she would have lost everything." Zi Long said as she placed the jug down on the table and sat on the other side of the bed, "I respect her choice. But really, even until the very end, it seems like my lord isn't cut out for greater things after all."

Zi Long laughed stiffly after she finished.

...

I smiled kindly at Zi Long, "You may say that, but you're actually grieving aren't you?"

"Am I?" She was surprised and hurriedly felt her white, clean face.

"Ah," I pointed at Zi Long's silver plate hanging at the side, "You've been wearing your silver plate since you left Beiping city right?"

— This plate armour was forced on me by my lord who likes it for some reason.

... I still remember what Zi Long said a while ago before the attack on Sishui Pass. Looking at the silver plate which was still shiny as new despite being covered with scratches all over, this plate armour probably symbolises Zi Long's loyalty to Gongsun Zan.

Zi Long lowered her head and curled up a bit. Her smile from before also seemed to be a lot more lonely.

"Perhaps, but I still respect her choice. ... Alright, let's stop talking about unhappy things. Let's go into business now that Xuan De is awake." Zi Long flicked her long, golden hair as she got up and turned to look at me, "I am here under the last order of my former lord Gongsun Zan to serve Liu Bei, Governor of Yu state."

Eh? Last order? Before I could even react, she knelt on one knee. This act shocked me and I hurriedly got up to help her up but my reaction was much slower than usual due to the pain in my back.

"What are you doing, Zi Long~~~ Ah, it hurts." I helped Zi Long up with one hand and saw that she was smiling widely at me, "You're making fun of me!"

She waved her hands. "How could I be making fun of you~ I just thought back

to what my lord said just before I left her. Now that I think about it, it really is a pity that she didn't come along with me."

"?" What exactly did Bo Gui say? "Never mind... So did Zi Long come to Ye city to find me?"

"Un, you can say that. I was planning on heading to Xu state but I didn't think Cao Cao's attack would be this quick." Zi Long took the jug of wine on the table and rubbed her hands on it, "But it all worked out anyway, since I ended up being able to meet you here."

"Worked out huh..." That's right, if it weren't for Zi Long, I would be rotting in the wilderness by now. No matter what, I should thank her first, "Zi Long, thank you for saving me."

"Eh? Ah, n, no need for thanks." She seemed to be at a loss due to my sudden thanks, and hurriedly turned her face away as she took a sip of wine.

Looks like between her sharp tongue and her slightly withdrawn nature, she isn't too used to praise and thanks. But it's this that makes Zi Long cute.

"Then, from now on, Xuan De is my lord."

"Eh?" I swallowed my wine and looked at Zi Long's beautiful smile before smiling in return, "Un, if you're fine with me. I look forward to working with you."

Zi Long's eyes were really pretty when she smiled, "Of course I'm fine with Xuan De who is always so kind!"

Un... To think she actually said such a thing out loud... This really makes me feel embarrassed. I felt my face heat up and hurriedly turned away and looked outside the window.

Bo Gui, as you wished, you can leave Zi Long to me.

I have a lot of things to complain to you but looks like I don't have a chance to speak with you anymore. When I finally have the time, I'll go visit your grave and I'll tell you everything I want to tell you.

"Hu... Looks like the tension is finally gone," Zi Long said as she placed her hand on her chest, "Alright, let's sleep." Zi Long finished her wine and set the jug on

the table as she said so.

“That’s right, it’s already pretty late. Go and sleep, Zi Long.”

“Un? What are you saying, my lord?” Zi Long said as she pointed at the bed I was lying in, “I only rented 1 room with 1 bed.”

“Eh?”

“I slept on the floor yesterday to let you rest but you wouldn’t possibly be planning on having me do so again tonight right?”

“Ah... Th, then I’ll sleep on the floor.”

“No, you’re wounded.”

“... Then what you mean is—”

“Hm hm,” Zi Long gave an evil laugh as she looked at the terrified me, and said the words I didn’t want to hear most, “We’re sleeping together of course.”

(TL: I don’t really like how the author shafted Bo Gui but it really can’t be helped. Keeping her alive would have been a lot more difficult than for Feng Xian.)

Chapter 18: Don't tell me these are the 3 requests

Yun Chang POV

I forced my eyes to stay open and kept my grip on the Green Dragon Crescent Blade tight as I stepped into the encampment filled with Cao army troops. I kept this up as I knew that the ones around me would be more cautious if they saw me being on guard.

But if something untoward were to happen later, would I really be able to break out of here alone?

No, I can't. My stamina has been completely drained and there is no way I can make it out of here alive.

"Oi, Xu Chu. Why doesn't Lord Cao Cao just overwhelm me with numbers? Does she intend to humiliate me before killing me?" I asked Xu Chu in front of me. She was both messenger and guide.

"How am I supposed to know what my lord is thinking!" Xu Chu seemed to not know what was going on as she exclaimed indignantly, "Death on the battlefield is the best ending for a warrior like yourself."

We were on the same side once, and as warriors, our thinking is aligned. Though I don't plan on dying here of course.

What I need to do know, is to try and think what Lord Cao Cao might say to me later.

"Go in. My lord ordered me to wait outside." Xu Chu stood at the entrance of a tent as she looked at me with the eyes of a beast, "If you so much as touch a hair of my lord, I will rip you to pieces."

... These eyes would probably give a horrible fright to most people.

"What happens will depend on what Lord Cao Cao has to say to me." I returned her gaze and entered the tent without saying anything else.

As I parted the curtains, I saw a familiar figure sitting at the table inside. She looked at me, and gave her characteristic confident, unfathomable smile.

"You're here." She said, and continued her work without meaning to get up.

"Un?" I was about to speak to her when 2 other people in the tent came over. These 2, were very familiar people indeed, and I couldn't help but to call out their names the moment I saw them, "Lord Lu Bu?! Wen Yuan?!"

Why? Why are the 2 of them here? Shouldn't they have left Xiapi for Yuan Shao by now?

"Yo, Yun Chang. It's been a while." Wen Yuan ran over to me and grabbed and shook my hands affectionately the moment she saw me.

"W, why are you both here?" I didn't bother with greetings and cut to the chase.

When she heard me ask this, Wen Yuan's smile diminished somewhat.

"Hai, we were planning to leave yesterday morning but a scout told us that there was no movement from your side so we didn't leave as we thought there might be some new developments." Wen Yuan said and turned to look at Lu Bu, "We only received news today that your night raid failed and you were ambushed. When she heard this, my lord emptied the city and charged out to where you were but we were only a few miles out when the Cao army occupied Xiapi city."

(TL: Some of you may recall that Cao Cao defeated Lu Bu in the Battle of Xiapi and had Lu Bu executed. That was supposed to happen a little while before this. Because Lu Bu in this series followed Liu Bei all along, Lu Bu never became the brash and foolhardy traitor the original was and never clashed with either Liu Bei or Cao Cao till now. If anything, I believe this is more than proof enough that history can be changed and have faith the author will deliver a fulfilling ending.)

Wen Yuan grew more and more despondent as she continued. And Lord Lu Bu, who was visibly enraged, continued from where Wen Yuan left off. "We had no way to retreat and so we could only continue to where you were. We were hoping to break through and at least escape with you 3, but we were surrounded before we could make it to where you were. Thereafter..."

"Thereafter, you both were 'invited' here by Lord Cao Cao just like I was right?"

Wen Yuan and Lord Lu Bu nodded.

Strange, why is Lord Cao Cao doing this for?

I directed my gaze to Lord Cao Cao and saw that she was still preoccupied with documents and was not looking at us.

“Lord Guan Yu, where is Xuan De now? How is he?” Lord Lu Bu got up and walked over with a grave expression as she asked me.

“That’s right that’s right, is our lord is alright?”

...

I couldn’t help but lower my head at the sudden question. The hand which held the Green Dragon Crescent Blade also began to tremble uncontrollably.

“... It’s my fault,” I said falteringly, “When we were ambushed, I got separated from big brother and little sister. I’ve been looking all this while but I haven’t... Wu!”

“My lord!”

I was lifted forcefully by my armour to the point where my legs couldn’t even reach the floor and it became difficult to breathe.

“Lord Guan Yu, this is a joke right?” I looked down and saw Lord Lu Bu’s eyes wide open and bloodshot. Her expression right now, was like that of a bloodsucking monster, “Please don’t tell me Xuan De has...”

“Calm down,” Just then, a firm and calm voice along with a brush being placed down could be heard, “Xuan De has neither been caught nor killed by anyone on our side. Li Dian just delivered a report which said that Xuan De has escaped on Li Dian’s horse.”

The strength that held me up disappeared the moment Lord Cao Cao finished and the monster before me flopped to the ground as well.

“My lord!”

“Ah, that’s great.” Lord Lu Bu muttered softly, before softly snoring.

Looks like she hasn’t been sleeping...

But it’s good. Big brother is fine.

"Ah, what about Yi De?!"

"Lord Zhang Fei... Seems to have escaped, and was not captured." Lord Cao Cao nodded and then smiled bitterly, "You lot are really difficult to deal with. Just a few thousand and you wrecked so much havoc in my tens of thousand strong force. If this happened with Yuan Shao, I would probably be wiped out within a few days."

Hu~~ That's great, everyone escaped.

"Alright, Lord Zhang Liao, help Lord Lu Bu to a seat and let her rest. Let's start talking business." Lord Cao Cao said as she got up and walked to the front of the table and smiled before she continued, "Do you all know why I invited you all instead of killing you all?"

"..." I looked back at Lord Cao Cao nervously and raised my blade to my chest, "If you wish to recruit us, then Lord Cao Cao's efforts have been in vain."

Hahaha. Lord Cao Cao guffawed the moment these words left my mouth.

"That is, of course, one of the reasons but not the primary one. If that was the case then I would definitely have had Hu Chi take away your weapons," She said and stepped up to where I was, and continued in a very calm and quiet voice, "I have not killed you all because you all are Xuan De's companions."

?!

Have I heard it wrongly?

"Because we're big brother's companions?"

"That is correct. That is why I cannot let you all die." Lord Cao Cao nodded, "If you all are dead, Xuan De will never be able to rise again; if you all are dead, then that means that I can declare the conquest of Liu to be a success and the officials in Xuchang will begin to rebel and I probably have to kill them; if you all are dead then the Han will... Ah, you don't need to pay too much attention to the last point."

"..."

The more she said, the less I understood. I looked at Wen Yuan, and saw that she was just as bewildered as I was. But I do understand that it means we have a

chance to see big brother again as long as we are still alive.

"It's fine even if you don't understand. In any case, you just need to interpret it as 'If you 3 do not follow the will of the Imperial Court for now, then there are no benefits to Xuan De at all.'" Lord Cao Cao said as she pointed at my blade, "Of course, you could choose to kill me here and now and end yourselves as well. What say you?"

"Wu..." Lord Cao Cao said everything I'd been meaning to say and I was now at a loss as to what to do. She now stood in front of me, and did not intend on giving me too much time to decide.

I thought for a moment and looked at Wen Yuan, who nodded at me. Looks like they have entrusted me with the responsibility to make a decision.

Then...

"I have 3 requests."

"Speak, I am willing to listen."

"First, we have surrendered to the Han and not Cao Cao."

"Deal." Lord Cao Cao smiled.

"Second, Gan Qing and Mi Zhen, as well as Lord Hua Tuo, are to be treated well."

"Deal." Lord Cao Cao smiled as always.

"Third," I took a deep breath and said the most critical condition, "If we should hear any news about big brother, we will immediately leave for him."

"Hahahaha~~" Surprisingly, Lord Cao Cao seemed to be neither angered nor frustrated by this, and laughed instead. She patted my shoulders as she said, "This is the Yun Chang I know."

At this, I finally relaxed.

(TL: In the original, as mentioned before, Lu Bu had died. Zhang Liao Zhang Wen Yuan had joined Cao Cao and was also the one who persuaded Guan Yu to surrender. Then, Guan Yu made almost the same 3 requests. The first was so that Guan Yu would not break the Oath of the Peach Garden. They had sworn to

serve the Han so surrendering to the Han would not break the oath. The second related to Lady Gan and Lady Mi, who were staying in Xu state city then. Cao Cao was reluctant to accede to the third, but Zhang Liao persuaded Cao Cao to relent in the hopes of winning Guan Yu over.)

Meng De POV

"My lord, what is the meaning of this?" After the 3 left, Xun Yu's voice came, "Those 3 are some of the strongest warrior generals of the land. If we cannot tame them, then we should kill them. Could it be that my lord still..."

"How can that be," I said and sat back down on my seat behind the table and picked up a scroll, "No matter what, we are in dire need of talent now that we are about to face off against Yuan Shao. As you said, they are some of the strongest warrior generals. If we don't use them, then who will? We will deal with what comes later. Just take them as temporary reinforcements."

Xun Yu did not say anything to what I said which gave me some relief. I don't know if I can keep my true thoughts to myself if she presses me further.

Hai~~

I leaned against my chair as the words in the scroll couldn't enter my eyes which were begininng to close.

Whatever the case, it's good that Xuan De is alive. Xuan De is another path for the restoration of the Han. He and his companions must not end here.

Gradually, I entered a much needed sleep.

Chapter 19: Don't tell me this is seeking refuge with Yuan Shao (1)

Liu Bei POV

"Ow! Zi Long, can't you be a bit gentler?"

"My lord is being far too spoiled. As a man, how can you be crying out in pain so easily?" As she said so, Zi Long continued to apply medicinal cream vigorously on my back.

Ugh... It really hurts.

"Have you heard any recent news about Yun Chang and the rest, Zi Long?" It's been 3-4 days since I came to Ye city, and I've been having Zi Long help me find information on Yun Chang and the rest.

"No. Cao Cao ended her campaign on Xu state shortly after your defeat and returned to Xuchang thereafter to get ready to deal with Yuan Shao. So there's very little information about what happened to Xu state reaching Ye city." Zi Long said as she shook her head after getting up.

She then came over and said in my ear, "Also, I've been gathering troops for my lord as well. When you are able to, you should show yourself in front of them."

"Eh? Gathering troops? When was this?"

"Just over the last couple of days. I've gathered a few hundred already." She said proudly and then continued after seeing my troubled expression, "I don't know what troubles my lord, but even if my lord intends on seeking refuge with another feudal lord for now, wouldn't it be better to bring along some of your own troops?"

"Un... That does make sense..." Though I said this, I was hurting deep down. The soldiers that had followed at the very beginning were by now mostly either dead or on the run and have never had an easy time. I wonder how much blood debt I owe by now.

As an ordinary high schooler, this burden is honestly too heavy for me to bear. Having the mental and emotional fortitude to bear the responsibility for hundreds and thousands of lives is not something I can easily muster.

“Speaking of which, where does my lord plan to go?” Zi Long said as she extended her hand and helped me up, “This Ye city can be considered to be within Yuan Shao’s sphere of influence in Hebei so Yuan Shao is the easiest choice. If we take a boat, we can also easily reach Sun Ce in Jiangdong or Liu Biao in Jing state.”

“Un... Indeed, where to?” I muttered as I sank into thought, The Xu state 3 floated up in my mind, “I’d sent people to test the waters of each of the 3 you mentioned but none of them have returned yet.”

I wonder if they know about what happened in Xu state. Also, how am I ever going to get in touch with them?

“My lord, if it were up to me, Yuan Shao would be the right choice.” Just as I was unable to decide, Zi Long advanced the conversation again, “Firstly, you both have Cao Cao as a common enemy. Second, she is the closest of all physically speaking. Lastly, my lord is, even if in name, a descendent of the Great Han, and assisting you would be a perfect front for Yuan Shao... Un? Why is my lord looking at me like that?”

“Ah, no.” I smiled to cover up my expression before and waved my hands, “I thought that Zi Long would have hated Yuan Shao after what happened to Bo Gui.”

Zi Long seemed to be calm after hearing what I said, and her expression did not waver. I thought I’d said the wrong thing when she gave a ‘hmph’.

“Learning how to prioritise reason and emotion is of utmost importance. I may curse Yuan Shao privately but for my lord, I must look at the issue at hand rationally. The reason why my lord has been reduced to such a pathetic state is because my lord is always thinking about the sad things that have happened in the past, soft-spoken, indecisive and overly kind. Will you please reflect on yourself?” Zi Long delivered me a scolding that left me no room for rebuttal much like a teacher from my era.

Zi Long looked at me and sighed, “In any case, from a rational point of view,

seeking refuge with Yuan Shao is the best choice for now—”

Ka! The door was brusquely slammed open.

“Who is it?!” Zi Long stood up immediately and yelled out at the person standing at the door, “I didn’t ask for any attendants!”

Zi Long’s caution made me nervous as well, and I squinted at the door as I hid behind Zi Long.

Because of a lack of light, I couldn’t quite see what the person looked like.

“Haa... Haa... Excuse me,” That person was panting and spoke in a very agitated and anxious female voice, “Is Liu Bei Liu Xuan Denstaying here?”

Un? This voice...

“Who are you? If you don’t leave now, don’t blame me...”

“Zi Long, wait.” I stopped Zi Long who was about to wield her long spear and stepped out, hoping to get a good look at who it was. When I did so, I saw that she wasn’t very tall and had a pair of big clear eyes that made one feel like she lacked energy atop a tall nose. Her hairdo gave a sense of propriety and prudence that was unlike her youthfulness. Right now, she had an anxious expression on her but I could still feel the aura of a knowledgeable and proper young woman.

When I realised who she was, I couldn’t help but to shout her name, “Gong You?!”

“Is it my lord?!”

When she heard me, her eyes widened as she ran towards me. When she finally saw me clearly, she dropped to the ground like a rock.

“Gong You!” I hurriedly ran forward and stretched my hands to catch her head.

“A, at last. I finally found you.” She muttered before fainting.

From what Zi Long said, it seems like there are no wounds on Gong You beside some minor scratches and she fainted from exhaustion and a lack of food.

A few hours later, Gong You regained consciousness.

"I've been searching for my lord for 4 days now. Ever since Xu state fell, I scoured Feng city, Xiaopei and Dingtao but I couldn't find any news about my lord at all." When she woke up, she returned to her usual calm and said flowingly, "I didn't hold much hope for Ye city but I never thought I'd hear that my lord was recruiting troops here. I'm so glad, I'm just so glad."

Gong You's voice gradually got more tearful as she continued and I patted her shoulders to comfort her only to realise that she was trembling.

"Has Gong You been on a horse all this while?"

"... Ah, yes." When she heard me ask this, she tried to hide the scratches on her hands.

Even though she isn't very good at horse riding... It must have been really hard on Gong You for her to ride for such a long distance.

"Speaking of which, is everything well with my lord? Where is Lord Yun Chang and Lord Yi De?"

"... Ah, that's a long story." I chuckled and lowered my head as I held Gong You's hands, not knowing where to begin.

Ah, no good. My feelings of relief and sorrow are threatening to overwhelm me. I'm starting to feel like crying.

"But this means we can go seek refuge with Yuan Shao right." Zi Long interrupted and brought back the conversation to the main topic when she saw that the atmosphere had become awkward.

"... Un, Yuan Shao has indicated that she is willing to offer refuge and assistance." Gong You nodded and looked at me, "Ye city is part of the lands over which Cao Cao and Yuan Shao are fighting over. This isn't a place we can stay for long, we should hurry to Nanpi as quickly as we can."

"I am of the same opinion, my lord." Zi Long added.

That's right, I can only seek refuge with Yuan Shao no matter what. And it is indeed true that I can't just stay here.

I looked at them and nodded in agreement.

"Alright, I'll go and gather our troops now, and we'll leave for Nanpi

immediately.” Zi Long nodded with a smile and quickly walked out of the room.

“... Speaking of which, my lord, the one from just now is—” The moment Zi Long stepped out, Gong You asked about her as she pointed at the door.

“Ah, she’s a subordinate of my good friend Gongsun Zan, who has now fallen and so Zi Long came to serve me. She is very impressive~~”

“... Another one came huh.”

“Un? Did you say something?”

“... Nothing.” Gong You shook her head as she smiled helplessly.

Chapter 20: Don't tell me this is a stay in Xuchang

Yun Chang POV

I woke up feeling refreshed and energised after a good night's sleep.

I sat on my bed in a daze and looked at the table by the door out of habit. The table was specially for any couriers and messengers to leave letters. Seeing that it was empty, I sighed.

It has been 3-4 days since we've left Xu state and came to Xuchang but there has been no news about big brother at all. Lord Cao Cao said she'd help me but I don't know whether I can rely on her. Even if she was a good friend before, now that we have become mortal enemies; even if Lord Cao Cao is putting in resources to search for big brother, he may not let himself be found so easily.

Or perhaps, big brother has already... No, he shouldn't have.

I put on my green robe and went to look for Gan Qing and Mi Zhen. They, and Hua Tuo, were residing in the inner residence which had softer beds than the one I was sleeping on. Ordinary girls like them can't be made to suffer too much hardship after all.

When we were in Xu state before, I had promised big brother that I would protect the 2 of them. And so ever since I came back to Xuchang, I've been checking on them everyday.

"Yo~~ Are the 2 of you well?" As I entered the inner residence, I gave a greeting as I saw them sitting in the main hall.

Un?

Sensing something amiss, I hurriedly stepped forward. As I got closer, I saw that Mi Zhen was rubbing her eyes which were filled with tears. Her hair was not tied yet either. Seems like she just woke up.

"Little Mi Zhen, what's the matter? Does your stomach hurt?"

"Ah, it's nothing serious." Gan Qing said with a helpless smile as she rubbed Mi Zhen's back. Gan Qing's eyes were slightly bloodshot as well, "Mi Zhen only had

a nightmare, and has been crying since she woke up.”

Hu, so it’s just a nightmare.

“I, I dreamt that Lord Liu Bei... Lord Liu Bei...”

On hearing big brother’s name, my heart sank once more.

Mi Zhen hasn’t seen big brother in a long time, and now that his life hangs in the balance, it wouldn’t be strange for her to dream of him.

“Little Mi Zhen, big brother...”

“I dreamt that Lord Liu Bei... Slept with some women...”

“Eh?”

Mi Zhen said some very surprising words while she cried.

“Don’t cry little sister. Big brother is very indecisive and won’t sleep with other women that easily.” Gan Qing comforted her.

“...”

“Umm, Lord Yun Chang, what’s the matter? Why are you sweating so much so early in the morning?”

“Un, un? Am I?” I hurriedly used the sleeves of my robe to wipe the sweat that streamed down my head.

Come to think of it, I haven’t told them about ‘that’ yet. But how in the world do I do that?

“In, in any case, the 2 of you need not worry too much, I’m sure that heaven will favour big brother.” I hurriedly added, hoping to make it less awkward.

Ka... Ka...

Un? These heavy steps are familiar...

“Is it Wen Yuan and Lord Lu Bu?” I turned and saw the 2 familiar warriors. Though they did not wear their plate, their figures were still as impressive as always, “You 2 have been coming here pretty often too huh.”

“Yeah,” Wen Yuan nodded with a smile, as though the things that have happened before were an illusion, “It’s also because Gan Qing and Mi Zhen have

been getting me to teach them some martial arts.”

That’s right. Perhaps they’ve been dissatisfied with being protected. Gan Qing and Mi Zhen have been very enthusiastic about learning martial arts. Sometimes the Xiahou sisters drop by and teach some moves to them as well, as though we are no longer enemies.

“Alright, I’ll get some practice done too.” I rolled up my sleeves, and made to pick a weapon and get some practice to take my mind off things.

“Lord Guan Yu, it seems like you have some other matters to attend to today.” Just then. Lu Bu who had been caressing Red Hare all this while said with a face that looked like she hadn’t woken up yet, “We ran into Cao Cao just now and she asked you to find her.”

“Un?” Lord Cao Cao is looking for me?

(TL: In the original, Guan Yu brought Lady Gan and Lady Mi back to Xuchang with him and let them stay in a cordoned off part of the residence Cao Cao gave him. He would check on them every day and give a progress report. One day, he came and saw that Lady Gan was crying as she had a nightmare that Liu Bei fell into a pit.)

“You called, Imperial Chancellor?”

“Ah, Yun Chang, You’re here.” When she saw me enter her room, Meng De got off her seat and walked over to welcome me.

“Come, have a look at this.” Meng De extended her hand and the 2 servants at the sides went to the back and returned with an elegant and exquisite silk robe.

“This is...”

“It’s for you. You were made a Lieutenant-General just a while ago so you ought to have a proper silk robe befitting of your official position.” Lord Cao Cao took the robe and tiptoed as she compared it to my frame, “How is it? Do you like it?”

Indeed, we were summoned to Court 2 days ago and given official positions. The positions themselves weren’t all that high, but still commanded significant prestige and it would be proper etiquette to wear nicer clothing befitting of the

positions.

But this silk robe...

"I thank the Imperial Chancellor for your kind intentions but I cannot change out of this robe." I rolled my shoulders and tried to make my green robe more tidy, "This clothing was a personal gift chosen by big brother when we first raised an army. Apart from this, I will no longer wear any other clothing."

"Oh~~" Lord Cao Cao nodded with a smile of realisation, "Then if Xuan De has passed away, what will you do?"

... Indeed, that is a problem that is probable in nature.

But I will still adhere to my beliefs.

I closed my eyes and clearly enunciated every word which rang in my ears. "I will join big brother in the earth."

"Un..." Lord Cao Cao nodded as she returned the robe to the servants.

"I believe that everyone else will give the same answer as well."

"I believe that to be the case as well." Lord Cao Cao still smiled as always. I really couldn't understand what she was thinking, "Perhaps it is because things are like this that I think so highly of Xuan De."

"Eh?"

"That's for me to know..."

Report-

Just as Lord Cao Cao was trying to wave things away with a smile, a military courier came in and got down on his knees with an anxious look.

"What is it that is so alarming?!" Lord Cao Cao said coldly as she immediately changed her face and covered her mouth with her sleeve.

The courier did not dare to wait any longer and raised his head to look at Lord Cao Cao before lowering his head and yelling out the news he bore.

— Yuan Shao has begun mobilising.

Chapter 21: Don't tell me this is seeking refuge with Yuan Shao (2)

Meng De POV

"The Yingchuan troops numbering about 3-40,000 have gathered in Xuchang. Yuan Shao forces have swelled to 120,000 after defeating Beiping's Gongsun Zan." I was currently galloping on horseback toward the outskirts of Xuchang while Xun Yu delivered the latest figures and updates as she sat behind me, "As for my lord's personal troops, the damage sustained by Liu Bei's counterattack in Xu state was not small at all. I'm afraid at least a third are badly wounded or dead."

"That is something we cannot do anything about... What about the frontlines?"

"Yue Jin, Cheng Yu and the rest have made it to their designated positions. General Xiahou Dun is guarding our back to prevent any surprise attack on Xuchang."

I nodded with a smile as I heard this. Looks like our preparations are complete. Looks like what I have to do now is... To think about our overarching strategy.

"Xun Yu, where is Feng Xiao?"

"Guo Jia has gone to Chengxi." Xun Yu said, "Seems like she intends on inviting Zhang Xiu's strategist, Jia Xu."

... Jia Xu huh. Haha, I can't believe Feng Xiao thought about the exact same thing as I did. I haven't actually met Jia Xu before but from what I've heard of her, and the trouble that Zhang Xiu has given me, I can sense that she is no ordinary person.

"... As my lord has guessed, Jia Xu is an extraordinary talent. But she is extremely cunning and may not be willing to serve us." Xun Yu was able to figure out what I was thinking and voiced her worries.

But I wasn't worried about this.

"Jia Xu will be able to see the situation for what it is, and make the right choice between me and Yuan Shao."

I hope so. Xun Yu muttered softly.

The me now was both elated at seeing the road that lay before me and also excited at the progress I was making along this road.

"My lord has also summoned Guan Yu and the other 2 right? Do you intend on having them march with you?"

"Ah, those 3 are very brave and strong warriors. Whether it's an ambush or a head-on clash, we need those 3."

"Un... My lord is right, but..." Xun Yu's voice became soft, as though she only wanted me to hear what came next, "Of the 3, Lu Bu is extremely moody and unpredictable. It's hard to tell when she will lose it and go wild."

Lu Bu huh... Though she's usually a woman of few words, her aura is completely different from everyone else. It feels like no one can control her.

"Don't worry, it'll be fine." I said to allay Xun Yu's concerns, "If Lu Bu was a feudal lord in her own right, I might have chosen to kill her. But the reins on her are still in the hands of Xuan De so using her is fine for now."

But really, how exactly did Xuan De win over that Lu Bu? Putting it another way, perhaps it's because it's Xuan De that Lu Bu could be tamed.

At this, I stopped all stray thoughts. What I need to think about now, is how to deal with the battle against Yuan Shao.

Xuan De POV

Following Gong You's guidance, I was able to quickly get in touch with Yuan Shao who directed us to head directly to Yuan Shao's garrison instead of Nanpi-Liyang.

In Ye city, we were able to recruit roughly 300 troops and the rest of the money left was used to buy as many horses from the north as possible so that we could reach Liyang as soon as possible.

I didn't think that an unknown person such as I could gather so many troops.

“Oi! Gong You!” The thunderous sound from the gallop of the horses filled my ears as I was riding at the front with Gong You and Zi Long. I had been thinking about something for a while now and could no longer hold back and decided to ask Gong You about it.

“!?” Gong You did not speak as she was concentrating on riding, but gestured with her chin for me to continue.

“Now that we’re heading towards Liyang, could it be that Yuan Shao intends for us to assist her in fighting Meng De?”

“...” Gong You held her breath as she shook her head vigorously before spitting out a few words, “But it will probably be like that!”

Un... Looks like I can’t avoid it huh. I’m not too familiar with the Battle of Guandu, but I do know about the slaying of Yan Liang and the Raid on Wuchao. Additionally, if we head to where Yuan Shao is right now, then we should be able to meet Yun Chang.

But would it really turn out to be like that? As a main character of this event, what evidence do I have that everything will go as the history I know?

I can’t say it will, for certain.

As I held these tumultuous emotions inside me while we advanced, Liyang city appeared before me.

Liyang city was only about the size of a county city and wasn’t big at all. But it had now become the advance base for Yuan Shao in her upcoming battle with Meng De and currently housed 5-60,000 troops.

Looks like the original inhabitants have been mostly driven out and only troops are left in Liyang city. As I thought so, I followed Gong You into the city.

As I looked about, apart from male and female troops, there were only weapons, plate armour and ancient siege weapons of all shapes and sizes about. There seemed to be no peaceful signs of life at all, only brutality and violence.

“Please be careful when you speak later, my lord.” Gong You whispered to me just as a tent that seemed extraordinarily big compared to the constructs about it appeared.

She then went up and parted the curtains—

“I’ve shed blood, sweat and tears for you, Yuan Shao! And now you turn on me!” Just as Gong You parted the curtains, a big and burly man cursed and swore as he was hauled out by 4 soldiers.

“Kill me?! You would dare kill me! You useless coward, Yuan Shao! You will die a horrible death!”

“Isn’t that Ju Yi?” Zi Long softly muttered.

“You know him?”

“I fought quite a few bouts with him at Jie Bridge. He was a brave and upright warrior, if a bit brusque.”

Is that so? Looks like he is another brave warrior general. But why is he about to be executed?

Just as I was looking on in bewilderment at this big, burly man who was being dragged out, the sounds of argument coming from inside the tent drew the attention of my eyeballs. I looked inside the tent and saw Yuan Shao, who was sitting on an elevated stage, while 6 girls sitting below her were embroiled in a heated argument.

Just then, Gong You pulled on my sleeve and bade me to go in with her. When I entered, Yuan Shao yelled out angrily, “Stop it you lot! Ju Yi has grown arrogant and overestimates himself. For this, he deserves to be executed. Tian Feng and Ju Shou need no longer bother defending him.”

Yuan Shao supported her chin with her hands and looked on with a fearsome gaze that emitted a pressure that made it hard for anyone to approach.

“My lord, we are now at a critical juncture where we are in need of manpower. How can you dismiss a general because of such a small matter?! Even if you want to execute him, you could have done so after the battle!”

But even so, a young girl who had her hair tied back in a ponytail continued to reason unrelentingly as she placed her hands in a salute before her chest.

“... Tian Feng! See if I will...” Yuan Shao’s rage seemed to have reached tipping point and she raised her hand, probably to gesture an order when she suddenly

saw us and put down her hand as she clenched her teeth. She gave a ‘hmpf’ before leaving the stage and storming out of the tent.

Seeing Yuan Shao leave, another girl wearing a black gown rolled her eyes at Tian Feng and then hurriedly followed after Yuan Shao.

“Yuan Hao, why do you have to go so far!? It’s not as if you don’t know how our lord is like.” Another girl, who seemed slightly older than Tian Feng, to the side said to her, but didn’t continue further when she saw us.

She turned to us and said, “Someone will give you your assignments later.” After saying this, she pushed Tian Feng out of the tent as well.

Gong You shook her head lightly, and shrugged as though to tell me that it is always like that.

“If the strategists and the lord are so disunited, how can they face an enemy together?” Zi Long said with worry as she placed her hands on her hips and frowned.

It feels like Yuan Shao has been like this since the feudal lord alliance, has that rich young miss attitude of hers remained as is since then?

Hai, if it’s like this, it would be weird if she didn’t lose to Meng De.

When I thought about how I had no choice but to join Yuan Shao’s side who would definitely lose, I felt troubled.

I hope I can reunite with Yun Chang soon.

“Lord Liu Bei?!”

Just as I was silently praying, a voice called out to me from behind all of a sudden.

When I turned back, I saw someone I hadn’t seen in a very long while.

Chapter 22: Don't tell me this is the garrison at Liyang

Xuan De POV

Zhang He brought us to where we could put down our gear and luggage and invited us to a restaurant for food and drinks. I was planning on settling our troops and luggage with Zi Long and Gong You but could not refuse the invitation and had to take leave with Gong You.

I didn't think that someone would be so happy in such an empty town but when I reached where Zhang He was waiting, she was smiling widely and seemed to be in very high spirits.

"Ah~~ It really has been a while since I've seen Lord Liu Bei." Zhang He shook her head as she said between taking swigs of wine, "I was planning on writing a letter to ask you how you were doing but then I heard you went to Xuchang so I thought better of it."



"That's right. I was in Xuchang for a while. ... Hai, everything that happened thereafter was just one big mess. It's a long story." I sighed as I drank with her, not forgetting to take a good look at this girl who was slightly older than me.

Ever since Han Fu committed suicide in Xu state a few months ago, Zhang He has joined Yuan Shao. I've never seen her since then, and now that I have had a good look at her, she doesn't seem to have changed much on the outside but her energy seems to be much less than before.

"And you. You came to join Yuan Shao after that?"

"Ah, yes, I came here directly after that." Zhang He said, and came up close

and whispered in my ear, “It’s just as I predicted. The higher ranked generals do not respect authority and the strategists are divided into factions. Yuan Ben Chu herself is as you’ve seen. Hai~~~”

“If that’s the case, then why are you still here?”

Zhang He pointed at the table and then at the door leading outside when she heard this.

“Lord Liu Bei doesn’t know but I came to Yuan Shao to investigate what happened with my comrades after my lord fell. But who knew that Ju Shou, Ju Yi, and everyone else joined Yuan Shao. I really don’t understand! Where have their loyalty and righteousness gone?!” Zhang He’s eyes began to fill with tears as she said so, and then she lowered her voice once more, “I’m still adhering to what I said to Lord Liu Bei before. Many things are difficult to solve from the outside so I’ll start from the inside. Lord Liu Bei should know why Yuan Shao is gathering troops here right?”

“To attack Yuan Shao?” I replied in a questioning tone on purpose.

Zhang He nodded and took a sip of wine before coming up to whisper in my ear with a look of fury, “When the time is ripe, I will mutiny.”

Eh? Mutiny?

“I, Zhang He, am a specialist at launching raids on the enemy. Yuan Shao, too, has recognised this, and always has me act first before the infantry charge forth,” Zhang He said, and revealed a confident look, “The upcoming battle is no different, and when the time comes, I will give her a good one when I mutiny.”

Zhang He’s words were very dangerous and I turned to look into her eyes which were steeped in hatred. I was planning on dissuading her, but I couldn’t help but to swallow back the words I meant to say.

I thought for a bit, but the only words I say in response were these. I took a drink of wine before I said, “Is that so. Then you better be careful.”

Zhang He lowered her head and nodded in acknowledgement.

“Ah~~ Wine always tastes better just before a big battle!”

“That’s right, for us sisters anyway. Generals have to be slain, blood has to be

shed, and wine has to be drunk~”

Just then, 2 off-key and refreshing voices came from behind.

I instinctively turned to look, and saw 2 young girls in plate armour sitting opposite each other at a table. One was wearing grey plate armour while the other was wearing brown plate armour. Both sets of armour had fearsome tiger and dragon motifs. Though the 2 of them had beautiful features, their pupils were narrow as though they had just taken medicine, perhaps from being on the battlefield for too long.

And their table was filled with wine jugs. Apart from wine, there was yet more wine.

These 2 are...

“Don’t look anymore, Lord Liu Bei. Those 2 are Yuan Shao’s most favoured generals— Yan Liang and Wen Chou. Their tempers are terrible and if we should catch their attention, I don’t know what might happen.” Zhang He warned me with her head still lowered.

I hurriedly turned my head back and stopped looking at them.

I’d thought that Yan Liang and Wen Chou would be big, burly men like Ju Yi. Though they differed from what I’d thought they would look like, seems like they aren’t ordinary people at all.

As I thought so, the scene I saw outside the tent came to mind again, and I couldn’t help but be convinced of the inevitability of Yuan Shao’s loss.

I looked at Zhang He’s face, which seemed thinner than before at Xu state.

After staring at her for a while, I shook my head.

No matter how I look at it, Meng De is better than Yuan Shao by far. Perhaps there is a reason why fate led Yuan Shao to lose.

By the time I regained my senses, we had finished the wine. Zhang He was planning on ordering another jug but I hurriedly stopped her.

“By the way,” Just before we separated, I remembered to ask about the combat situation, “Where is Yuan Shao planning to attack first?”

Zhang He did not speak, and wrote 'Baima, Yan Liang' on the table with wine. I nodded, gave my farewell to Zhang He, and took a last look at Yan Liang and Wen Chou before I left the restaurant.

Chapter 23: Don't tell me this is Yuan Shao (1)

TL: Things are going to significantly diverge from original soon.

Liu Bei POV

As I stepped out of the restaurant, I looked up at the sky and found that the sun was beginning to recede from the horizon. It was getting late and when I thought about how Gong You and Zi Long would yell at me, fear filled my heart and I shuddered as I hurriedly ran back.

Baima, Yan Liang.

Un... Looks like we're heading there as expected huh.

So if I follow Yan Liang's troops to Baima, I should be able to meet Yun Chang. If that's the case, then I really should look for Yuan Shao and make that request later.

But wait... If I remember correctly, the Battle of Baima will end in a loss for Yuan Shao's side. If I participate in the battle, then the few hundred men I brought will be in peril.

Is it really alright to doom so many lives for my selfish wish?

Un... Looks like it's not right as I thought.

“– Ah!” Just then, I stepped on something and fell forward as I lost my balance, “... Ouch!”

I managed to cushion my fall with my hands but I still fell heavily onto the sandy ground. My hands were badly hurt and scratched, and I didn't need to look to know that my skin was probably torn.

“Who was that?! Running about with your eyes closed~” An elegant voice complained from behind me, “Un? You're... Liu Bei?”

I turned to look where the voice came from and found a young woman bending over and looking at me. She was beautiful, with smooth white skin, and had her long, wavy hair tied up in twin tails. Her clothing was luxurious and stood

at odds with the austere nature of everything else in this military compound. It wasn't just anyone, it was Yuan Shao herself.

Eh... Was it Yuan Shao who tripped me just now?

No, I can't say that since I tripped because I wasn't looking carefully.

"Ah, Lord Yuan Shao. I deeply apologise, I was thinking about something just now... Ugh."

I tried to use my hands to help myself up but I forgot that my palms were wounded and fell back to the ground as my hands hurt too much.

This was bad, I'm supposed to help with unloading of the wagons later.

"Un? Are your hands injured?" I'd thought that Yuan Shao would have left by now but she actually noticed my strange behaviour, "Really, how can an Imperial Uncle of the Great Han be so clumsy."

When she finished, she didn't wait to ask and pulled me up by my wrists with force. From the way her arms trembled as she pulled me up, it seems like Yuan Shao isn't particularly strong. Or perhaps her constitution is at the level of an ordinary administrative official.

"Ah, thank you Lord Yuan Shao."

"There's no need for thanks, it's not like it's a big deal anyway." Yuan Shao said disdainfully and turned her face away as she made to leave. But after a few steps, she turned back, "Right, I forgot. Looks like the medic division will only arrive tomorrow. How is your hand looking?"

Ah, so she's worried about my hands.

"Un un, it's fine." I said as I hurriedly placed my bleeding hands behind my back, "I'll just get Gong You to help me bandage my hands later."

"Bandage... But it won't be good if the wound gets infected." Yuan Shao muttered and then waved the folding fan in her hand at me, "Come along, I have some medicinal powder in my tent that can help. Come take some and rub it on your hands."

Eh? Yuan Shao is giving me medicine?

No way. Is Yuan Shao the kind who takes care of people?

“Sit on the bed, I’ll find it for you.”

When I entered Yuan Shao’s personal tent, it seemed like the scenery changed completely. The furnishings inside did not just consist of a bed and table. There was a carpet, wall scrolls, a bookshelf filled with books like the Six Secret Teachings and the Analects. In short, there was everything that one needed to live comfortably here.

“Ah, found it.” As she said so, Yuan Shao turned and threw it over, “Catch.”

“Un~” I frantically caught it as cold sweat streamed down my back. This medicine was definitely not cheap and if it landed on the ground, it wouldn’t end with monetary compensation, “... Am I going to have to apply it myself?”

When she heard what I said, Yuan Shao showed an expression that looked like she didn’t understand what I was saying.

“Ah? Of course you are...” She stopped when she realised I couldn’t use my hands. She then looked about and saw that there were no servants about before walking over with a frown, “You better be thankful to me, I don’t help people apply medicine.”

That’s what I thought.

She took the medicine and sat beside me as she used a small spoon to scatter the powder over my wound.

“Ouch!”

“Bear with it. How can a man like you be crying out about pain like that.” Yuan Shao said as she kept her eyes on my wound while she spread the powder slowly with the spoon.

(TL: Guys, I was wrong. The MC does have a special power after all. The ability to trigger a maternal instinct in all females...)

I slowly opened my eyes which had scrunched up from the pain and what greeted me was Yuan Shao’s exquisite and elegant looks up close. If only Yuan Shao would treat her subordinates like this.

Just then, I remembered something I'd been meaning to ask. It wasn't something critical but it could at least break the awkward silence.

"Lord Yuan Shao, were you friends with Cao Cao in your childhood?"

If I remember correctly, there seems to be such a setting.

The moment those words left my mouth, Yuan Shao's glance seemed to move upwards but they returned to where they were before immediately.

"Friends... Huh. If I had to define our relationship, I guess it would be that." Yuan Shao's voice was unusually calm, "Our social circles had a lot of overlap then so we spent quite a bit of time together."

Is that so, looks like they are friends after all.

"Since you're friends, why are you both pointing swords at each other?" The moment the words came out, I felt like I had asked a very stupid question.

Wealth, land, glory.

There were myriad answers to my question. But in the next instant, Yuan Shao gave a puzzling answer unhesitantly.

"It's simple, I just want Meng De to acknowledge my ability."

"Eh?"

Acknowledge, ability.

"Since young, I've always been the good kid. I perfectly memorised all the Court mannerisms and rituals taught and I always completed the homework set by my teachers. But Meng De was the opposite. She was always a naughty lass and would try and make me responsible for bad things and get me in trouble." Yuan Shao's voice was agitated as she said so, "But that Meng De would always get better test scores than me and get much better and more praises than me."

Ouch!

Yuan Shao applied more strength into her hands but I felt like this wasn't a good time to interrupt her.

"I sometimes wonder if I'm just a toy to Meng De. Perhaps she never thought of me as a friend or a rival. Perhaps all I am in her eyes is just a failure and a trash

bun.” Yuan Shao said and stretched her neck, revealing the look of a kid who was about to cry, “But this time, I’ll show Meng De that I’ve gotten this far. And we’ll see who is the stronger of us both.”

Yuan Shao said all she wanted to in one breath. She sighed when she finished and returned the spoon into the medicine bottle.

Honestly, Yuan Shao’s intentions are understandable. Her position in society is high and her intelligence is not low either. But yet, she is continually defeated and seemingly bullied by Meng De, whose position is beneath hers. Thus, it’s not strange for Yuan Shao to be thinking like how she is right now.

But I never expected that Yuan Shao was not as ambitious as I thought. Seems like all she wants is affirmation.

“Ah, thanks.” Though it hurt quite a bit midway, I was really thankful and frankly still bewildered at the fact that Yuan Shao actually applied medicine for me.

“Like I said, no need for thanks,” Yuan Shao’s mood seemed to have recovered and she stood up and continued with her back to me, “Don’t misunderstand anything. I’m only applying medicine for you because of your status as Imperial Uncle.”

As she said so, Yuan Shao began to walk slowly to her seat.

Un?

I didn’t notice just now when we were walking here, but it seems like Yuan Shao is walking a little strangely, and is limping as though her left leg is injured.

Did she also take a fall when she knocked into me just now? I thought as I sat on the bed.

“Why are you still here? Didn’t you say you were going to help your subordinates unload the wagons?”

“Ah? Oh, I’ll be leaving now.”

“I really envy you~” Just as I was about to step out of the tent, I heard a strange lament from Yuan Shao behind me.

“What is it?”

"No, nothing. Go on. I have work to do."

I looked at Yuan Shao and saw that she was holding the medicine bottle with one hand and rubbing her left knee with the other. I smiled and parted the curtains as I left the tent.

I think Yuan Shao doesn't want me to see her weak side.

As I thought so, I felt like I understood Yuan Shao better. But I soon remembered the matter of the wagons and stopped thinking as I carefully ran back to my encampment.

(TL: This story is essentially about good people who are forced to do things by circumstances. Practically no one is evil here.)

Chapter 24: Don't tell me this is Yuan Shao (2)

TL: Cliché harem scene incoming but a good deal of character exposition with fanservice.

After I returned to my encampment, I found that most of what needed to be done was already done and I went to find Zi Long and Gong You with trepidation, and got scolded as expected. It wasn't just Zi Long, even Gong You who was always mild-tempered gave me a hard time. I tried to explain that I was at Yuan Shao's tent but it somehow made them even more enraged.

But that is understandable since I was gone for a very long time so it would be strange if they easily believed me when I said that I wasn't slacking off. But what they don't know is that I was also lost for quite a while. I wanted to explain myself but felt that it would probably seen as an excuse and decided against it.

By the time the 2 of them were done, it was already dinnertime. They probably felt that they had had enough and kicked me out of the tent with displeased expressions.

"My lord, go and bring our dinner back here." Zi Long said with a frown as she folded her arms across her chest and leaned against a pillar.

"Ah?" You want me to go find dinner?

"This is your punishment. My lord should graciously accept it." Gong You had tucked her hands in her sleeves and had a refined look on her before she said to me with great emphasis, "Remember to return once you've collected dinner. Do not, under any circumstances, have unnecessary rendezvous with certain women."

Eh? What do you mean by that?

I wanted to ask, but the atmosphere did not permit me to stay for long and so I swallowed my question and grunted in affirmation before setting off to find dinner.

"Hai~~~" After walking for a bit, I sighed and stretched my back to loosen up my strained muscles after sitting in the same posture for several hours.

Was all that really necessary? All I did was just spend some time with Zhang He and Yuan Shao. And if you really want to make me do work, you could have let me stay. I just can't see why they would make such a big fuss about this.

Forget it... Dinner, got to go find dinner now~~ Speaking of which, I have no idea where the canteen is.

Should I ask the soldiers? Un... But at this time, everyone else seems to be eating so it feels weird to interrupt... Zhang He? No, I don't know where her tent is.

Tent? ... That's right, I can just go and ask Yuan Shao. She would definitely know. And as I thought so, I started making my way to Yuan Shao's tent without thinking too much about it.

And if I ask Yuan Shao, I might luck out and get better food from her. She's a rich young miss after all, so her food should be better than everyone else's.

Convinced of my choice, and with my newfound familiarity of the city after getting lost, I was able to quickly reach Yuan Shao's tent.

Eh? Why is there no one at the entrance? Even if it was mealtime, there should at least be a guard.

Never mind.

"Lord Yuan Shao..." I softly called out as I parted the curtains and poked my head in.

"Ah! Don't come in!" Even though those words entered my ears, my eyes were still drawn to the source of the sound.

Yuan Shao sat naked on the bed, her smooth, white skin glistening with water droplets all over her body that made it seem even more luscious and alluring. The 2 mounds in front were ever more tantalising with her long, wet hair which only partially covered them. In this cold wintry evening, her wet body was continuously emitting steam, making Yuan Shao, who was now without her exquisite clothing, even more beautiful than she usually was.

This scene completely transfixed me.

And Yuan Shao froze as well, her hands which were drying her hair stopped

their motions in mid-air.

After a long while, the 2 of us finally regained our senses.

“Ya!!!”

“S, sorry!” Along with Yuan Shao’s scream, several items which looked very exorbitant were hurled at me. I protected my head and ran outside the tent and thought back to what I saw.

Eh? What is this situation?! Why did Yuan Shao look like she just finished bathing?

No, no no no. What I need to think about is how I will be dealt with later? It’s over, I’m dead for sure. I’ll probably have dozens of charges which will end up having various body parts being chopped off...

“Oi...”

“Eh?”

Just as I was about to panic, a weak voice called out from the direction of the tent. I slowly turned my head and saw Yuan Shao, who had worn her inner clothing, standing outside the tent. Her cheeks were reddened and she looked to the side before she slowly said, “If there’s anything, come inside first.

“Oh... Oh.”

I answered without thinking. All that was in my mind was that... It was good to be alive.

“Sit.”

“Oh...” I clumsily sat down on a small stool, and did not dare to speak.

“Unbelievable, have you not learnt to say something before entering someone’s residence?”

“I deeply apologise.”

“Hmph, that’s why you lot are... Speaking of which, what are you here for at such a time?” Yuan Shao had by now regained her elegant and refined countenance and sighed as she shook her head.

Ah, right. I nearly forgot what I came here for.

"Ah, I came here to ask Lord Yuan Shao where the canteen is..."

(TL: Would you ask the CEO where the pantry is? Logic!)

As I said so, my eyes fell on a few plain plates on her desk. The food in the plates were just as plain, and didn't look luxurious at all. Speaking of which, the food looks familiar.

Is Yuan Shao eating this for dinner? No, I can't judge by it how it looks. Maybe it's actually delicious?

"Why are you finding me for even such trivial matters? Anyway the canteen is in the northern edge of the city. It's already pretty late but there should still be a lot of food left." As she said so, Yuan Shao took a spoonful of food from the plate and delivered it to her mouth. "Un..."

She closed her eyes and grimaced as she chewed and swallowed. Doesn't look like it's delicious at all.

... Oh, isn't the food Yuan Shao is eating the same food as the soldiers are getting? No wonder it looks so familiar.

"Does Lord Yuan Shao eat this for dinner usually?"

"Eh? Ah, no, I just try out what ordinary people usually eat sometimes." She frantically hid the plate with her hand when she saw suspicion on my face and put on a high-and-mighty expression, "Wh, what are you lookong at! Can't I eat these?"

I hurriedly shook my head.

I'd heard before that bathing before meals would enhance one's appetite. She couldn't have done so to help her eat that plate of food right?

This is just a guess of mine... But could it be that Yuan Shao is truly compassionate about the ordinary people? No way.

"What are you smiling about! Keep smiling and I'll get someone to throw you out!" She picked up a bun and hurled it at me as she cried out and only then did I realise that I was smiling.

"Ah, no." I hurriedly dodged the flying pieces of food, "I was just wondering why Lord Yuan Shao has to be so sneaky about it even though all you want is to

blend on with everyone else.”

I’d thought that I would suffer another wave of attacks after I finished but surprisingly the attack ended.

I looked at Yuan Shao in bewilderment, and saw that she had lowered her head as she nibbled on the bun in her hands with her small, cute mouth.

“As I was saying, I really envy people like you.” After a long while, Yuan Shao finally bit into the bun and spoke to me in a very dissatisfied tone, “Every feudal lord wishes to have good relations with their subordinates~”

“Eh? Then why are you always so...”

“Eh!” Yuan Shao suddenly became angry, “You commoners, you don’t understand how hard it is to be a noble.”

Eh? Hard?

“As a noble, I’ve been taught since young that I am above everyone else. At times, when things do not go my way, I act out to protect my pride on instinct.” Yuan Shao said in between bites of the bun, “I do feel regretful when I reflect on what happened but I am unable to apologise or retract my orders to save face.”

“There are times when I feel that what they proposed was correct, and even something beyond what I could come up with. I know I should praise them for it, but another side of me keeps denying them. But then again, who doesn’t like hearing praises of themselves?”

“I really don’t know what I should do sometimes. Should I treat my subordinates as tools or should I think of them as companions? It feels like if I think of them as companions, I will be belittled.”

The more Yuan Shao said, the more despondent her tone got. Her mouth was by now filled with the bun but she only kept chewing and did not swallow a single mouth. Perhaps the bun was too dry, as Yuan Shao’s eyes began tearing up.

I wasn’t planning on listening to a long rant from Yuan Shao, nor did I ever imagine that Yuan Shao would rant on for so long. But I finally have a good understanding of what Yuan Shao is like after listening to what she said,

She was actually the same as Yuan Shu, and did not know how to handle her relationship and how to treat her subordinates. As a descendent of one of the most illustrious noble families, the pride in her blood prevented her from getting too close with her subordinates. Perhaps Yuan Shao is just lonely, and she desires close companionship but she ended up hurting others due to her internal conflicts.

Nature and nurture gave rise to a desire to be able to connect on a deep level with commoners and everyone which conflicted with the pride of a noble, creating a very difficult conundrum.

As I thought so, I began to think that the girl before me wasn't a big-breasted brainless person at all. At the very least, she was trying in her own way.

"Yuan Shao, do you know what you're doing right now?" I said to a perplexed Yuan Shao as I slowly got up, "You're trying to be a commoner to fit in with everyone."

"Wh, who would want to fit in with those people..." Yuan Shao turned her face away as she tried to deny what I said.

But with this, Yuan Shao's heart is clear to see so I need not rebut her, and I continued with what I wanted to say, "But there is something much simpler you can do."

I gave Yuan Shao a kind smile as I continued, "You just need to think of everyone as a noble, no?"

Yuan Shao stared at me in silence for a long while. She continued chewing on the bun in her mouth and eventually swallowed. She then lowered her head.

"I'll try." After a long while, I finally hear Yuan Shao's elegant and resolute voice from behind me.

Maa, that should be all I can do. This sort of emotional turmoil is not something that can be resolved in a day or 2 so she needs to really think it over.

"Well then, I'll be heading to the canteen, Lord Yuan Shao." As I said so, I made to leave but when I reached the entrance, I heard Yuan Shao's voice again.

"Umm, thank you. For listening to what I had to say," Instead of the powerful

voice from before, she said this to me in a cute voice befitting that of a young girl like her, “And... You can just call me Ben Chu from now on. Ah! Don’t misunderstand. It’s only because you’re the Imperial Uncle of the Great Han so I don’t want to be so formal with you!”

I looked at Yuan Shao’s reddened face and nodded with a helpless smile before I hurriedly ran out of the tent and headed for the canteen.

Hai, look at the time. I’ll probably be scolded again when I get back.

Chapter 25: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Baima (1)

Liu Bei POV

After staying in Liyang for 2-3 days, I began to realise that the troop numbers were swelling from new entrants into the city. I checked with Zhang He when we went to drink again and learnt that Ben Chu had actually mobilised over 100,000 men which were now gathered at the border between Yuan and Cao territories.

And during this stay, I also learnt that Feng Xian and Zhang Liao had not made it here before us. After much investigation, we learnt from informal sources that the 2 were with Yun Chang so this greatly allayed my concerns. The only worry I had left was what sort of mess Lu Bu, who was not supposed to be a part of the Battle of Guan Du, would create this time.

Recently, meetings have increased in frequency and the main topics revolved around tactics to be employed in various battlefields, which meant that war was imminent.

Baima, Yan Liang— I never forgot these words Zhang He gave me.

The reason why I proactively participated in the meetings was not to make Ben Chu's deployment work easier. It was so that I could understand the flow of battle and be able to grasp the movements of Yun Chang and the rest as early as possible.

I don't know if what I said had an effect, but in the meetings that followed after we spoke in her tent, she reduced the elevation of her special seat by half. She also layered in thick boards in the tent, which made it such that the other seats were now at the same level with hers.

The effect of these changes were obvious and everyone was befuddled by this. Perhaps only I and Yuan Shao understand the meaning behind this.

"Alright, that's all for today." Ben Chu said softly, and got up to leave. Before she left, she turned and said, "Yan Liang, Wen Chou. And... Xuan De, you come over as well."

Not only did Ben Chu get me to change the way I address her, she also

changed the way she addressed me, which honestly felt a little weird. And for some reason, Zi Long and Gong You gave me another round of scolding after they learnt of this.

But she's calling for me now?

Yan Liang and Wen Chou were the same as always and quickly followed Ben Chu to the back of the tent. I did not dare tarry any longer and quickly followed them as well.

This was the first time I was in the back of the tent. It wasn't particularly big, and could only fit a slightly larger table. It felt more like a single room that was carved out of the tent.

"I didn't mention that we are going to attack Baima first but I'm sure you all have detected as much." Ben Chu said very softly.

"Eh? Is that so?" "Attacking Baima?!"

"Softer you 2! Are you girls! Do you want the entire Central Plains to hear it!" Ben Chu scolded as she smacked Yan Liang and Wen Chou's heads with her folding fan.

Do these 2 really not know before this?

"Really!" Ben Chu shook her head, "You both weren't around the last time when we discussed this. Yan Liang will be going to conquer Baima."

"Eh~~~ Just her alone?"

"Don't be too eager, Wen Chou. There are more than enough battles to go around." Ben Chu smiled as she patted Wen Chou's shoulders, "Let Yan Liang go first, there will be more chances for you in future."

"Hehe, sorry about it, Wen Chou~"

"Hmph! You're lucky this time!"

Yan Liang and Wen Chou were bickering with each other as they left, but it was obvious that they were joking.

Now, only I and Ben Chu were left.

"Ah, Xuan De." Just then, Ben Chu finally called out to me, "I heard that one of

the slayers of Hua Xiong, Guan Yu, has been forced to surrender to Meng De, and she will be participating in the upcoming battle.”

Ben Chu didn’t finish what she wanted to say, probably because she felt I would be able to understand her implied meaning. But at this time, it was better to be clear.

“What Ben Chu means is...”

“What I mean is, can you put aside your personal feelings when you face her on the battlefield?”

“Ah...”

I completely forgot that. I only thought about how I was going to see Yun Chang at last and completely forgot that we were now enemies.

“That is...” I know I should at least give the right answer for appearance’s sake to Ben Chu but I really couldn’t say it, and could only spit out an “I don’t know.”

I don’t know if Yun Chang is really serving Meng De but Yun Chang will usually set aside her personal feelings on the battlefield. There is also the effects of bloodlust, which makes anything possible on the battlefield.

“I thought so as well.” But Ben Chu did not try and force me to, instead she nodded, “Then I’ll try and grasp Guan Yu’s movements beforehand and let you know as soon as possible. The decision to move out will depend on you. I won’t force your hand.”

“... Eh?”

Honestly, hearing such considerate words from Ben Chu greatly surprised me. I really didn’t think that Yuan Shao would be so understanding.

“Wh, what! I’ll say this first, this is no reason for you to slack off!” Yuan Shao turned her face away when she saw me, “Yuan Hao and the rest also said that it would be even better if you could persuade them to rejoin you on the battlefield if you meet them, so you better work hard on that!”

Rejoin me? Un...

“Un, that’s all, Xuan De can go back now...”

"Umm," Ben Chu was about to leave but I stopped her and looked into her eyes as I said the words I've been thinking about for a very long time, "... I want to join the attack on Baima."

Yun Chang POV

Without knowing how urgent the situation had become, we left behind Gan Qing and Mi Zhen as we headed toward Guandu without rest at full speed. Guandu was not very far from Xuchang, and we could see many evacuating civilians along the way. Because of an imminent war, all civilians living around the border between Cao and Yuan have packed up and headed south.

This is why I hate wars.

And I don't know if it's intentional, but I'm not in the same division as Wen Yuan, which is rather regrettable. On the other hand, Hua Tuo has been assigned to my battalion as a military medic. I'd thought she would not be accustomed to hardship at first but then I remembered that she had been through a lot with us, and with the Yellow Turbans so I didn't think too much about it, and asked if she had heard anything about big brother from the physicians.

"Un... The physicians don't really talk to me at all~~~" Hua Tuo said as she held her chin with her small hands, and said in puzzlement, "Whenever I go and say hi, they always disperse. Sometimes, I get tripped as well. Hehehe."

This isn't something to laugh about, aren't you being bullied?!

(TL: The great mystic commander Zhang Jue, subjected to classroom bullying...)

In any case, big brother should not have died yet, and as long as we're both alive, we can meet again. This was something that I have held on to.

As I thought so, we were now at the encampment at Guandu, and my heart began to wander more and more toward thinking about big brother and Yi De.

"Oi! Lord Guan Yu~~" Just then, Lord Cao Cao's voice could be heard from afar. I turned and saw her coming over.

"Ah, Lord Cao Cao." I saluted and bowed.

"No need for such formalities," Lord Cao Cao said as she waved her hand,

“How have you been recently?”

“Everything is fine.” For some reason, I always ask Lord Cao Cao this whenever I meet her, “Umm, Lord Cao Cao. Have you heard any news of my big brother?”

When she heard me say this, Lord Cao Cao began ruffling her hair with a helpless smile. “Yes... Some time ago, I had a report come in that said that someone saw Xuan De head north from Ye city.”

“Eh!” I didn’t expect that there would be news this time, and I hurriedly stepped forward, “What else?!”

Lord Cao Cao casually took a step back and waved her hands, seems like she doesn’t know where big brother headed to.

“But one can more or less guess. Perhaps Xuan De is residing in some city,” Lord Cao Cao smiled as she curled her hair with her fingers, “Or perhaps Xuan De has joined Ben Chu.”

Yuan Shao? Isn’t that the enemy we are facing this time?! Does that mean I might meet with big brother on the battlefield? I wonder if Wen Yuan and Lord Lu Bu know of this.

“Don’t worry,” Lord Cao Cao smiled as she patted my shoulders, “When you all see Xuan De, you can just leave right away. Don’t worry about my side.”

“...” Lord Cao Cao seems to have really searched for us, but, “Lord Cao Cao need not worry. We owe a favour to Lord Cao Cao so even if we do leave, we must repay your favour first. This is something Lord Cao Cao need not worry about.” As I said so, I bowed.

“Lord Guan Yu is truly a virtuous woman, but you need not worry about such things. Didn’t I say it before? I personally do not wish to see anything untoward happen to Xuan De.” As she said so, Lord Cao Cao gave a smile that was unlike her usual one, and seemed more sincere.

— Report!!

Un?

Just then, it seemed like something happened, as everyone in the encampment was on alert and a military courier rushed over and knelt before Lord Cao Cao.

“What is it that has alarmed you?” Lord Cao Cao asked calmly, to which the military courier said with difficulty.

— Baima has been invaded.

Chapter 26: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Baima (2)

Liu Bei POV

The next day, I handed over command of my personal army to Gong You, and was planning on reporting alone to the punitive force sent to conquer Baima when Zi Long stopped me as she was afraid I would be careless. I wasn't able to refute her and had no choice but to bring her along. Under a further request from her, we did not join the main body, and were placed in charge of the supplies in the rearguard.

In this expedition, Yan Liang brought a rather substantial number of troops. And so before we even reached the city, we heard that she had already broke into the city.

"Yan Liang is a great general as expected." Zi Long nodded with a smile when she heard the news, "I've had several dozen bouts with Wen Chou before, and it was never decisive. I've also heard that Yan Liang's bravery and martial skills are better than Wen Chou's."

Un... I would like to be impressed but I can't feel it. No, it's not that I'm not impressed, but that I have no spare capacity to think about other things at the moment.

"I heard Yuan Shao saying she needs Baima as a checkpoint for launching attacks further southward. Seems like this place has significant strategic importance." The confident smile appeared in my head, "If it's that important, Meng De will definitely not hand over Baima that easily, and will surely send reinforcements."

That's right, I'm more concerned about the reinforcements. As I looked at the city ahead which was much smaller than Liyang, my heart began to start thumping.

Yun Chang, would you appear before me?

"Ah, the supply team is here~" Just as we entered the city, Yan Liang's loud yell resounded. I looked over and saw Yan Liang running toward us from afar.

"We really troubled you huh Lord Liu Bei. You even had to help us manage our supplies, hahaha~~" Yan Liang said so in a mocking tone and didn't bother with me anymore as she began to count the wagons that wheeled in.

"Lord Yan Liang, have you deployed troops to each city gate?" Zi Long hurriedly asked when she saw no one at the city walls, "If they aren't in position yet, immediately send some archers up to see if there are any Cao army reinforcements!"

"Reinforcements? Impossible impossible. General Liu Yan who was guarding this city looked like a fearless man but he only had 3,000 men after all so I was able to sweep them out easily. Liu Yan himself has disappeared to god knows where~" Yan Liang said, and got off her warhorse, "Besides, I have more than 10,000 troops here. Cao Cao has only several ten thousand troops, how would she dare to pull off enough troops to face me?"

Yan Liang smiled as she said so, and placed her broadsword on the horse before taking out a wine gourd which she began drinking from.

Zi Long shook her head as she looked at Yan Liang before turning to me as though she suddenly thought of something, "My lord, I haven't asked but what is the reason why you want to join this expedition?"

"Ah... That." I can't really tell her I have a vague idea of how history will go, can I? But I can't help but tell her how I really felt anyway, "I just have a feeling that Yun Chang will come."

"My lord means that Guan Yu will assist Cao Cao in attacking Yuan Shao?"

I nodded.

"Then what does my lord plan to do if Guan Yu does come?" Zi Long understood what I meant but her eyebrows creased, "Could it be that you plan on having Guan Yu join our side?"

"That's what Ben Chu and the rest told me to do," I said, and sighed, "But from what I know of her, having Yun Chang change sides in a battle is not possible. Moreover, there are more people still in Xuchang, changing sides is easier said than done."

But at least, I should be able to meet Yun Chang.

As we continued to talk, we walked toward the center of the city. There were many battalions in the city but most were preoccupied with snatching the equipment and supplies left behind by the Cao army and were scattered all over the city.

“General Yan Liang, drinking will make it difficult to work~~” An officer saluted and tried to stop Yan Liang who was still drinking behind us.

“No problem!” Not only did Yan Liang not stop, she even started forcing that officer to drink as well.

Hai, if the Cao army just sends a battalion of light cavalry to attack us, this scattered defensive line will fall easily...

Dadadadadadadada

Un?

What is this sound that is creating significant tremors in the ground caused by? Horse hooves?

I looked about and saw that the other soldiers had stopped what they were doing and were looking for the source of the sound...

“Report!!! The Cao army is coming!!” Just then, the voice of a soldier at the city walls captured the attention of the entire army and in the next instant, almost everyone began panicking.

“Don’t panic! Everyone report to your 1,000-man general! All those who have gathered their troops, follow me to battle!” Yan Liang threw down her wine gourd and mounted her horse. Yan Liang’s actions seemed obtuse and frantic, perhaps from the effect of alcohol and the surprise from the sudden attack.

“Don’t leave my side, my lord,” Zi Long, however, was calm, and we followed a battalion of troops that followed after Yan Liang, and she began to explain to me, “We are only guest generals, and need not fight for her. We just need to follow along.”

After only a few hundred meters, the troops ahead descended into chaos again.

I looked ahead, and saw Yan Liang fighting with a Cao general who wielded a

large axe. The Cao general had lifeless eyes which were able to read every move of Yan Liang's. Yan Liang had great strength but every move was deflected, parried or dodged and the Cao general counterattacked between openings such that the entire flow of battle was completely dictated by the Cao general.

But I wasn't here to see their duel, and I fervently searched for the figure of a green robed girl but there were far too many troops in the area and it was hard to separate body from body.

"Yaa!!!!!!" Just then, a thunderous roar came from in front. I looked over and saw a young girl wearing green, with red hair fly out from the surrounding crowds like an arrow.

Yun Chang!!

She galloped through the troops and made it to Yan Liang's side. Before I knew what happened, Yan Liang cried out and fell to the ground.

When they saw their commanding general cut down, the surrounding troops descended into total chaos and many began to retreat.

"Yun Chang!" I yelled on my horse and made to rush to Yun Chang.

But in the chaotic battlefield, it was difficult for me to advance. The noises from the battlefield also scared my horse quite a bit, and my ability to control the horse was no sufficient for me to command it to enter the fray.

"My lord, there are too many troops ahead. It's too dangerous." Zi Long said as she frantically held on to the reins in my hands, and pulled me along as we ran out of the city.

"No, Yun Chang is still there." My eyes never left Yun Chang but she did not come over, and turned her horse away and left.

"My lord, even if you do meet Yun Chang! What can you hope to achieve in this chaos?!" Zi Long yelled at me and slapped my back.

The strength behind the slap was so great I nearly fainted. I coughed for a while and by the time I recovered, Yun Chang was nowhere to be seen.

I kept yelling out her name but there was no reply.

Zi Long brought me and the other troops out of the city. We only stopped to rest after we were several miles out of the city and we saw that there were no pursuers. Looking about, it seems like we only have half of our original troops left. I looked at Baima city and saw that the Cao flag was flying at the city walls once more.

At this time, I had finally calmed down. Now that I think about it, I hadn't even thought of what I ought to say if I really did meet Yun Chang. And so if we did meet, that would probably result in an even greater mess.

On the other hand, I was relieved as I finally saw Yun Chang alive. But now there was another problem. General Yan Liang was dead and by Yun Chang's hands no less. If I go back now, I wonder if Ben Chu will suspect me...

"Hai, I really messed up huh~~~ I can't believe I got done in by that green lass~~"

Eh?

I looked to the side and saw Yan Liang standing beside me. "Eh?! A ghost!"

"Oi oi, Lord Liu Bei, what's with that look of yours? Do you really wish that I'm dead?"

"But, just now..." Zi Long seemed very bewildered as well just like me.

"Haha, I really have to thank my lord this time." As she said so, she took off her outer plate and revealed another layer of plate inside, both of which were sliced in half but Yan Liang herself was unhurt. "I don't know what's with my lord recently, as she seems to be happy all the time nowadays. Just before I left today, my lord even specially gave me her personal plate. Thanks to it, I wasn't sliced in half... But it still hurt quite a bit~~"

Leaving aside how Yan Liang was able to move so well despite wearing 2 sets of plate armour, Yun Chang actually sliced through those 2 layers of plate with 1 blow that even threw Yan Liang to the ground. What sort of ungodly strength does Yun Chang have huh.

But Yan Liang didn't die... That's different from what happened in history... As I thought so, I followed Yan Liang who gathered the scattered troops and returned to Liyang.

(TL: Battle proceeded much like in original. Only difference is as MC stated, Yan Liang survived. This is only one of several differences that you will see leading up to the Battle of Guandu.)

And just a few minutes ago, we received news that Wen Chou was slain in Yan Ford. The general who slew Wen Chou was said to have sliced Wen Chou in 2 within the span of a single bout.

The retreating soldiers weren't clear on how that general looked like. All they could remember was a blood-covered double-sided halberd.

(TL: Obviously, it was Feng Xian / Lu Bu who did it, and yes, Wen Chou was not supposed to die here.)

Chapter 27: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Baima (3)

Yun Chang POV

Hu...

I thought back to every scene I saw in Baima city as I sat on my horse. Though my time there was short, I am sure that I caught a glimpse of, and heard, big brother.

Could it just be a psychological effect? Because Lord Cao Cao had spoken to me of such a possibility?

"What is Lord Guan Yu thinking about? I can feel the distractions in your heart from your breathing." Xu Huang, who had come along with me, raised her axe and shut her eyes as she rode on, "Of course, if you're not comfortable to talk about it, then that's fine."

"Ah, no... Just some private matters." I was a little nervous at how she saw through me so easily and coughed as I said so, hoping to change the topic.

"As a warrior, the worst thing one fears is distractions in one's heart." Xu Huang continued calmly with her eyes closed, "Though I don't know what troubles you, you should put everything aside once you wield a weapon and get atop a horse."

Un... Indeed, what she says is correct.

Xu Huang is a true warrior. In comparison, I fall short by a fair bit. Even if I want to set aside my worries, I can't.

I've never felt like this before, and never though that I would be this uneasy and worried after being apart from big brother for just a few days. Perhaps my righteousness and values I hold aren't much after all.

As I thought so, I couldn't help but to shake my head at myself.

"Oi~~~ Yun Chang~~~"

Un?

I looked over and saw another Cao army battalion across the river. At their

head were 3 people, 1 of whom was waving at us while the other 2 were playing with a pet.

Un... Isn't that Wen Yuan?!

"Eh? Why are you all here?" I yelled out and walked forward toward them partway. They too began to lead their troops across when they saw that the water was shallow.

"Heh!" Wen Yuan pulled on the reins and the horse leapt over and landed in front of me. She saluted and said, "We had orders from Lord Cao Cao and followed General Cao Ren's troops to attack Yan Ford while Yuan Shao attacked Baima."

"Did you all take it?"

By now, Lord Lu Bu and Cao Ren were here with the rest of the troops as well. I saluted Lord Lu Bu while Xu Huang saluted Cao Ren who very reluctantly separated from Red Hare.

"No, we only brought a few hundred cavalry after all." Wen Yuan shook her head in regret, "We did quite a bit of damage but who knew that their rearguard would support the main body so quickly."

"That's enough, my cousin.... No, the Imperial Chancellor wanted us to raid Yan Ford just to distract Yuan Shao so that she will send troops to assist Yan Ford and divert her attention away from Baima." Cao Ren said as she shook her head, "Now that we've regained Baima, it's enough."

(TL: Previously, I thought that Cao Ren was Cao Cao's little sister as Cao Cao addressed her as such. But seems like it's cousin instead which is the same as the historical version.)

(TL: The reason for attacking Yan Ford, and the deployments apart from Lu Bu of course, are the same as well.)

She was short, about as tall as Hua Tuo. Her looks greatly resembled that of Lord Cao Cao, making it seem like she was a mini-version of Lord Cao Cao.

"Leaving that aside, my lord has really outdone herself this time, she actually slew Wen Chou in 1 bout." Wen Yuan said excitedly, and seemed as happy as if

she did it herself.

But that is truly impressive of Lord Lu Bu. Though I've never fought her seriously before, but from the times we have practiced together, I can tell that her skills are definitely not below mine.

"The ones who wrongly accused me of killing my foster father are Dong Zhuo and Yuan Shao. Today, I have gotten my rightful vengeance." Lord Lu Bu said as she caressed Red Hare in her arms, her double-sided halberd still glistening with blood.

Just then, Lord Lu Bu changed the topic, "But that is a small matter now. Lord Guan Yu, if you have any news about Xuan De, you must tell us as soon as possible and we will head out to where Xuan De is immediately."

Wen Yuan nodded at what Lord Lu Bu said.

I don't know if it's just me but it seems like the light in Lord Lu Bu's eyes becomes much softer and Lord Lu Bu herself seems much more approachable once she talks about big brother.

But, it was just in that instant.

"Ah, I know." I don't intend on speaking about what happened in Baima since I'm not even sure of it myself.

And now that Lord Lu Bu has slain Wen Chou while I have killed Yan Liang, no matter what, we have repaid Lord Cao Cao's favour. If we do indeed find news of big brother, we have legitimate reason to leave immediately for big brother.

I shivered as a cold wintry breeze blew and as I looked at the bleak wintry landscape, my heart felt a lot more colder as well.

Looks like it will be a couple of months before Lunar New Year is here...

Liu Bei POV

I don't know if it's because I've gotten too used to this era but I've completely forgotten what season it was in mine when I transferred. But this cold weather felt somewhat familiar, and I realised that it should be about new year's around this time.

I was now kneeling at my seat and thinking about such things as I was at a loss as to what to say due to the heavy atmosphere in the tent.

“Wen Chou...”

The strategists, administrative officials, and generals were sitting where they usually were but Ben Chu, who was usually sitting at the head, had left her seat. She was now hugging a bloodstained piece of clothing and lowered her head as she knelt in a corner and muttered the name of the previous owner of the clothing over and over.

Wen Chou was dead.

This bad news came to us just as we returned to the encampment in Liyang. Not only did we fail to take Baima, we lost a great general despite having kept Yan Ford. From a strategic perspective, this will be bad for troop morale. And for Yuan Shao, the damage will no doubt be great.

I looked at Yan Liang to the side, and saw that she looked as playful as ever, but she was silent and tears streamed down her eyes continuously.

About Wen Chou’s death, I can’t say I’m very saddened by it. But when I see this scene, I’m reminded that this is the doing of Feng Xian and a deep-seated sense of guilt assails me.

Killing people has always given me a strange sense of dread and fear but at this moment I was finally clear what the feeling was. It was guilt. At this point, I’ve already killed quite a few people while Yun Chang, Yi De, and the rest have killed many, many more. I’ve always stood on the side who has killed, and now that I’m seeing things from the perspective of one who has been killed, I’m starting to lose my way.

Because these are troubled times, blood will flow; because blood flows, tears will flow; because tears flow, these are troubled times.

As I thought so, I lost even the mood to sigh. Because I know that I can’t sigh. I can only accept the reality before me.

“My lord, though Wen Chou’s death is indeed very saddening, we still have to fight this war. We still have a numerical advantage,” Tian Feng, who sat at the front, said with closed eyes, “If we do not make any big mistake, we should be

able to win."

"... Yuan Hao, do you have any good ideas?" Yuan Shao asked as she sat where she was and listened to what Tian Feng was about to say.

Tian Feng calmly stood up and slowly said what she wanted to propose.

— Attrition. Within a month, Cao Cao will be forced to retreat when she runs out of supplies.

Chapter 28: Don't tell me this is the standoff period

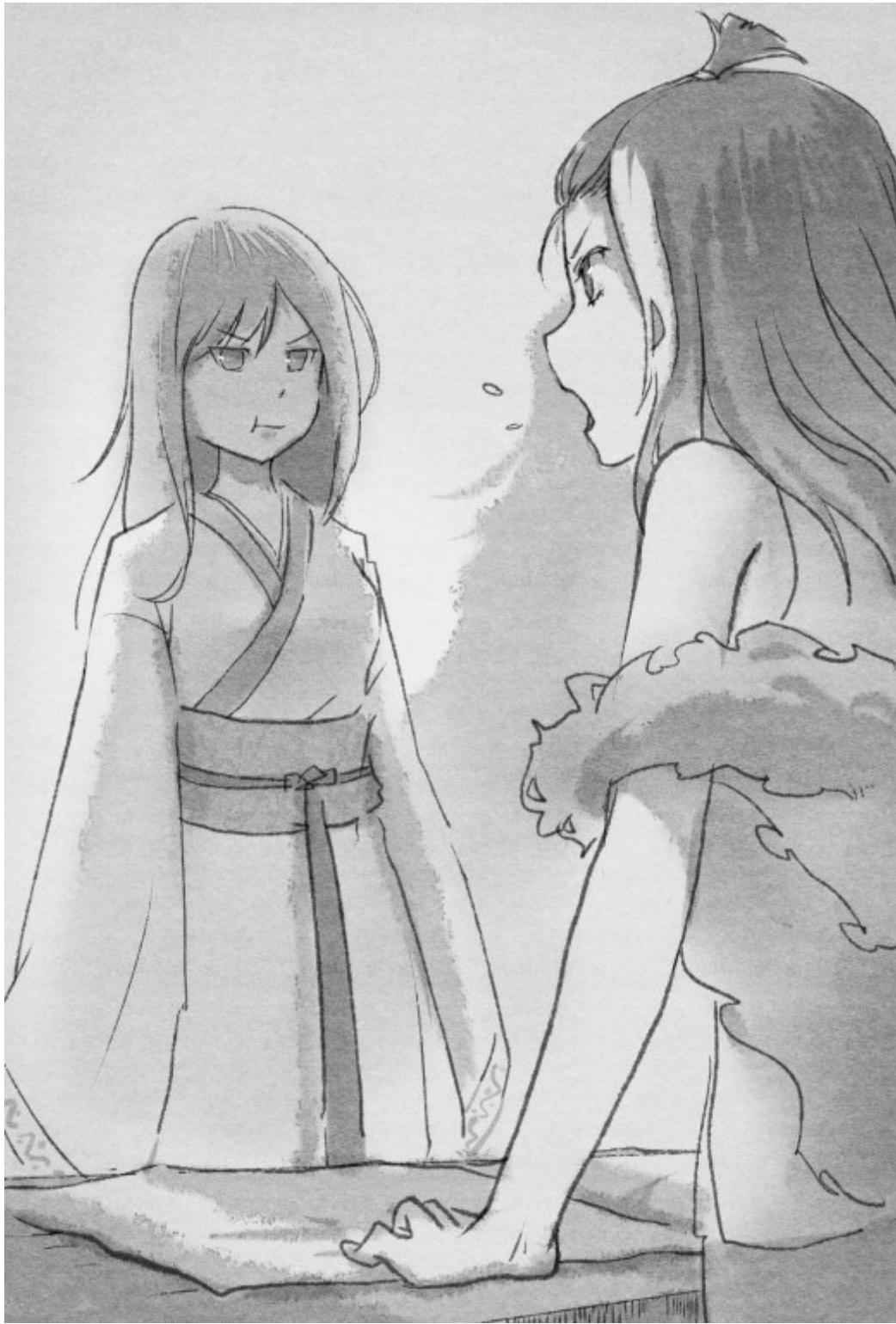
Liu Bei POV

"My lord, another supply caravan has been intercepted." A girl by the name of Feng Ji who wore a black gown said unhappily during the meeting.

If I remember correctly, she's the one in charge of logistics.

"It's the 3rd time this month already." Another girl with a similarly irritated look to the side of Feng Ji added, "My lord, we may have reduced Cao Cao's stores by a fair bit but ours have also reduced. Cao Cao has few men and horses, it is a prime opportunity for us to launch a decisive strike!"

"That so-called prime opportunity will arrive in 2 weeks! Right now, the Cao army is lacking resources and is seeking an opportunity to end this. By attacking, we are doing exactly what Cao Cao wants." Tian Feng said as she pouted.



Ju Shou who sat beside her added in as well, “What Yuan Hao says is correct. Now that our supply caravans are being attacked, we should increase vigilance. There is no need to...”

“Then what you’re trying to say is that our defences are the problem right?!”

“Well of course they are! Must I say it out loud?”

“Tian Feng! You!”

The 4 girls, split into 2 on either side, kept saying the opposite of what the other side said and naturally ignited conflict. As the argument got more and more heated up, I, who was sitting at the end, couldn’t help but feel scared.

Looking at Ben Chu sitting at the head, she had a look of irritation as always. I'm guessing that within the next 3-4 sentences, Ben Chu's anger will explode.

Hai... With these strategists, I can't really blame her for not knowing what to do. Speaking of which, I should probably try to think of something.

— Pa

Along with a heavy slam on the table, Yuan Shao stood up and began to scold angrily, "Aiya! Stop arguing already you..."

!!

"U, umm!" When I saw that Ben Chu was about to lose herself in anger, I hurriedly stood up and interrupted her.

When they saw me stand, everyone quietened down and looked at me. Ben Chu, too, looked calm now unlike her irritated self from before and sat down. "What does Xuan De have to share?"

"... Ah." It's over, I just wanted to stop Yuan Shao from saying something bad out of anger and never thought about what to say.

I stood where I was, not sure what to say.

"If we must do something," Just then, Tian Feng spoke up as she flicked her braids, "We can send an expedition to Mount Jiluo to see what is the status of the Cao army and whether they have any plans to retreat."

"Ah! Yes, that was what I was going to say." I seized the opportunity when I saw it.

Ben Chu seemed really happy when she heard me say this.

"Oh~ Xuan De is truly courageous and proactive huh~~" Ben Chu smiled, as though the irritation and frustration from before was just an illusion, "Alright! You'll go with Yan Liang. She's been a little crazy lately from a lack of fighting."

"... Ah, yes."

Speaking of which, does that mean I'll be leading the expedition?

Only after everything was decided did I realise this problem.

(TL: The way the lead-up to the Battle of Guandu has changed is significant. In

the original, there were many more skirmishes between the Battle of Baima and the Battle of Mount Jiluo, all of which Yuan Shao lost. Not only did he lose troops, he also lost good generals, supplies and morale kept falling. Only after a lot of skirmishes did Yuan Shao resort to attrition.)

Meng De POV

Ever since the Battle of Baima, where my cousin and Guan Yu both achieved victory, I'd thought that Ben Chu would get anxious and launch big offensive operations. Never did I imagine that an impatient fellow like her would play a game of attrition with me. Though my army has managed to intercept quite a few supply caravans, my main supply lines are a problem. Xun Yu back in Xuchang should probably be having a headache on the issue of procurement of supplies.

"My lord, according to the latest reports from the 1,000-man generals, our army has suffered another 200 odd deaths from disease... Ah!" Just then, Hu Chi came rushing in from the door, and nearly slipped fell. Her small face was filled with anxiety, and even though it has been a few days since she last fought, her face was still covered in dust, "If we don't find a way to solve this, we could have an epidemic on our hands soon."

"Un..." I felt uneasy as I sat on the chair, "Have any generals fallen ill?"

"Cai Yang and Zhao Dong have fallen ill. Liu Yan's shoulder injury has come back due to the weather."

Oh? That many? Looks like I'll have to go pay them a visit soon. I can't be losing any generals due to disease at this time.

"Hu Chi, help me summon Hua Tuo. She should be able to do something."

"About that, she has already begun treating them since 2 days ago," Hu Chi said as she wiped the beads of sweat on her head, "But the cause of disease is due to the constitution of the soldiers. Seems like they are unused to the environment and medicine, as well as other treatment methods, can't do much."

Is that so... Hai, that does make sense when you think about it.

I sighed in my heart as I got up and walked over to Hu Chi and patted her

shoulders before I wiped the dust off her face.

"Hu Chi, you must make sure to take care of yourself as well. You're strong and healthy but you're still young. Don't be getting sick at this time."

"Oh, thanks for your concern, my lord." Hu Chi seemed to have gotten more energetic at hearing my concern, "My lord shouldn't tire herself out too much as well."

"Un, don't worry." I nodded and rubbed Hu Chi's forehead, "Go rest for now. There might not be any big battles recently, but we can't afford to lower our guard."

Hu Chi acknowledged what I said and ran out of the tent.

To me, Hu Chi's energy is far more precious than her martial skills.

I only relaxed after seeing Hu Chi run a distance away. Though I'd made it seem like I had a solution, I was quite shaken inside.

If this goes on, I'll have to retreat to Xuchang in 2 weeks. I wonder what Xun Yu has to say in such a dire situation.

I sat down on my seat, and raised my brush but stopped in mid-air for a long while before finally putting it down again.

"Is my lord thinking of writing to Wen Ruo?" I was honestly very surprised to hear a voice out of nowhere but I was able to suppress it somehow, and looked about calmly, trying to find the source.

"Is it Cheng Yu?" I asked.

"... It is indeed your retainer." I looked outside the tent, and saw a small figure bowing, "I was just given new orders to go to Juan city in the meeting before, and wanted to say my farewells to my lord before leaving."

"Oh. Juan city huh. That's the frontlines, you better be careful." Un, Juan city... "From what I remember, Juan city only has a few hundred troops right. I'll give you a deployment order, bring another 2,000 men with you."

"Ah, there is no need for that, my lord. Those few hundred men are enough," She hurriedly turned me down when she heard what I said, "Yuan Shao will not dare to attack when she sees how few troops there are. If Yuan Shao does

attack, and my lord increases the garrison there, it won't be enough to hold out against Yuan Shao anyway and we will only increase our losses."

(TL: A similar conversation and deployment also took place in the original.)

"Un... That does make sense, I'll go along with what you said then."

As she said so, Cheng Yu bowed once more. I thought she was going to leave but she stood there and spoke once more, "If my lord wishes to write to Wen Ruo, that is fine. My lord should just do as she wants."

Eh?

"You're not going to oppose me?"

When I heard Cheng Yu's low voice, I was still wondering what she was going to say.

"Of course not, because I know what my lord will write and I can also guess what Wen Ruo will reply." Cheng Yu nodded as she continued, "My lord is lacking of nothing but confidence."

For some reason, I was convinced by Cheng Yu's words and was about to inquire the reasons behind why she thought so but found that she had already left.

That fellow... She doesn't speak much usually, but she probably knows everything.

I shook my head as I smiled and raised the brush once more as I slowly wrote what I thought.

Chapter 29: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Mount Jiluo (1)

TL: Please see this: [Announcement](#).

Liu Bei POV

I've never seen Mount Jiluo before, nor have I even heard of this name. Only after I consulted Gong You when I returned to my camp did I know what it was. Mount Jiluo was a relatively lesser known mountain beside the Taihang Mountains. Its southern peak can easily spy on Guandu. But because of the steep terrain, it was difficult to station a garrison there.

This expedition is probably to go around and see if there is an opportunity to attack. And also, as Tian Feng said, to scout out the status of the Cao army.

My knowledge of history is limited and I'm not too privy to the details of the Three Kingdoms. All I know about the Battle of Guandu is the slaying of Yan Liang, the execution of Wen Chou and the Raid on Wuchao. I don't know if the historical Liu Bei was the same as me and proactively volunteered to lead an expedition to Mount Jiluo on the fly.

(TL: Wen Chou was also killed by Guan Yu in the original in one of the skirmishes between Baima and Mount Jiluo. Just as in the previous chapter, Guan Yu only considered his debt to Cao Cao repaid when Yan Liang and Wen Chou were killed.)

But at the very least, I am sure that the one who is supposed to go with Liu Bei to Mount Jiluo is not the one currently next to me.

(TL: In the original, it was Han Meng who was sent, along with Liu Bei, to Mount Jiluo. It was meant as an actual offensive operation, and not a see-if-you-can-attack / scouting operation like here.)

"Un un~ Alright, my body's finally loosening up."

I looked at Yan Liang beside me who was currently rolling her shoulders and riding slowly beside me with a refreshed look, "It's been a while since I've fought

and my body has gotten all stiff... Ah, my wound still hurts~~" She rubbed her waist as she said so with a helpless smile.

"Is Lord Yan Liang's waist alright?"

"Ah, it's not that big of a problem." Yan Liang said as she shook her head, "I wonder if I can see that green robed lass again in this expedition. If we do, I want to have a proper duel with her."

I no longer felt perturbed as I looked at Yan Liang's excited expression. For a warrior like herself, the most invigorating thing would probably be a proper duel with another strong warrior.

"At the same time," All of a sudden, I could feel bloodlust from Yan Liang, "I want to kill the one who killed Wen Chou."

...

Only recently did I realise how unknown Feng Xian remained because Dong Zhuo did not use her. Because she never joined Dong Zhuo, Dong Zhuo was not able to deploy her against the feudal lord alliance then and so she never got famous and hardly anyone would be on guard if they met her. Naturally, Yan Liang would also be unaware of the name of the number one warrior in the Three Kingdoms era, nor would ahe know that Feng Xian is actually my companion.

If Feng Xian really does come, what will I do...

"Xuan De, Xuan De."

Un? I felt someone touch my left arm and turned to see that it was Zi Long.

Just like with Baima, Zi Long came along with me. And because I was the one who proactively volunteered to lead this expedition, I could not assign myself to guard the supply caravans.

"What's the matter, Zi Long?" I asked as I slowed the horse and backed up a bit,

"What the heck is my lord thinking huh?!" Along with a knock on my head, Zi Long began to scold me in a not-so-loud voice, "We are guests here, and need not have interfered in the Cao-Yuan conflict. Yuan Shao herself also said we

could do as we please. And yet, my lord actually volunteered to lead this expedition. What kind of mess do you want to get into huh?"

It can't be that serious... Is what I wanted to say but when I looked at Zi Long, I saw that she was very serious about it.

It can't be helped. She's my subordinate general after all, and she will naturally think of my safety and how our side benefits first.

"I understand how you feel," I smiled bitterly as I began to consider this problem inside.

I've spent a fair amount of time with Yuan Shao in this period, and my impression of her has changed from that of a spoilt rich young miss with her head in the clouds to a hardworking leader with initiative who is the heart of her community.

But no matter how hard she tries, Ben Chu will lose the Battle of Guandu. And when the Battle ends, Ben Chu will probably escape northward in despair and disgrace, and eventually end her life.

Right now, I'm not seeing things on the side of history, but from the viewpoint of Liu Bei and I have grown to sympathise Ben Chu and her inevitable tragic fate.

Of course, there's no way I can state this reason out loud.

"Look at it this way Zi Long," I said after I managed to think of a good reason, "The more intense the war between Meng De and Ben Chu gets, the worse off the 2 are at the end of it, and the weaker they will be. When we finally rise again, our opportunity to carve out our own territory will be much easier, no?"

Though these were just things I thought up on the fly, they sounded so convincing even I was won over by my own words.

Zi Long thought for a bit after she heard what I said and nodded, and did not bring this up again.

"Oh! I can see Mount Jiluo already."

I went up to take a look when I heard Yan Liang's shout and saw a mountain peak that wasn't very tall up ahead. There was yet another mountain peak beside and in between them was a narrow pathway that could only fit 3 people

side by side.

Guandu should be just past this pathway.

As I thought about this, I began considering how to deal with the problem of Yun Chang and the rest, as well as the upcoming Battle of Guandu.

Meng De POV

“Our supplies are running low but it has not yet reached the time when we should retreat immediately. My lord has held a standoff with Yuan Shao and stationed all her troops in Guandu for this long. Whoever moves first will likely be at a disadvantage and after this long, Yuan Shao will probably do something soon. My lord should remain patient and seize any opportunity that arises which will lead to a victory over Yuan Shao.”

I smiled as I finished reading the letter.

Xun Yu did not say too much in the letter from Xuchang, nor did she give any concrete tactics, but because of this, my confidence in staying put at Guandu has been revived.

As Cheng Yu said, perhaps all I lacked was a bit of confidence. And what Xun Yu did was just to boost my confidence. What I need are not schemes but some encouragement.

Though I don't want to admit it, what I really need is someone who understands me and whom I can speak freely with. This was probably the very reason why I felt very relaxed while Xuan De was in Xuchang.

As I thought about this, I saw another pile of letters and uneasiness began to fill my heart.

“Feng Xiao...” I turned and saw her sitting beside a pile of scrolls and coughing up blood profusely, “Oi, you....mAre you alright?”

Even though this was normal for her, I was still worried nonetheless. The weather wasn't good and temperatures could shift drastically within the hour. Many soldiers were down with diseases and this young girl with a weak constitution would probably fare worse.

“Ke Ke... I'm fine,” She scratched her messy, long hair, and wiped her mouth

with straw paper using trembling hands before throwing it into a pile of used straw paper at the side. Every sheet of straw paper had blood on it, “What does my lord seek my counsel for?”

“Un... I heard that Sun Ce might launch an attack on Xuchang... Do you think...”

“No, Sun Ce won’t come.” Feng Xiao said as she held her head painfully and used a weak voice to interrupt me, “Sun Ce has only just unified Jiangdong and has enemies everywhere. She is also distant in nature and will find it difficult to resolve this. Ke Ke!”

(TL: A similar conversation happened in the original as well. Except that Feng Xiao predicted that Sun Ce would be assassinated, and Sun Ce was indeed assassinated by disgruntled surrendered generals on his way to Xuchang.)

I turned to look outside the tent as I couldn’t bear to see Feng Xiao cough up blood. Various things began swimming in my mind as I looked outside.

“Report! Scouts ahead have found Yuan Shao’s troops advancing toward Mount Jiluo!” Just then, a soldier from far off yelled out as he ran over.

Mount Jiluo! Has Yuan Shao finally moved out?!

“Go, tell Cao Ren to face them!”

Chapter 30: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Mount Jiluo (2)

TL: Please see this: [Announcement](#).

Liu Bei POV

Whether a mountain slope is steep or not, one can only tell after going up the slip. And I now have a full appreciation of how steep Mount Jiluo's slopes are from my arduous climb.

This mountain wasn't very high, and I could see the peak if I just raised my head, but we were climbing somewhere to the side of the narrow pathway and so it was steeper and harder to climb. If one does not continuously climb in a crouched position, one can easily lose balance and keel over.

If I had to put a number to it, the elevation was probably about 50 degrees or so.

"Be careful of the small stones beneath your feet, my lord. Soldiers to the back, don't fall behind as well, move!" Zi Long, who was walking ahead of me, had very good climbing techniques. It was also thanks to this that all I had to do was to follow where she went.

But this Yan Liang really knows how to order people around huh.

"Lord Liu Bei, I'm going to trouble you with an important mission," Just before the narrow pathway, Yan Liang waved and a portion of the troops stepped out, "We'll split into 2. I'll ascend via this narrow pathway and Lord Liu Bei will climb up the slope to the side swiftly, which will allow you to see the Cao army movements from a good vantage point. Ah, right, don't bring the horses, they will only slow you down."

Hai~~ I lightly sighed.

"If I knew that it was this steep, I would have swapped routes with Yan Liang." I complained as dust flew into my face.

"What are you talking about, my lord? Climbing the mountain this way is much

easier." We were almost at the halfway mark now, when Zi Long spoke to me in a questioning tone, "Yan Liang's route makes her vulnerable to enemy ambushes. It will be difficult to detect our movements on this route. We will also be at a high ground and can charge down to assist Yan Liang if she is attacked."

"Un... So Yan Liang is actually looking our for me?"

"That is the case, yes."

That playful face floated up in my mind. No matter how I look at it, she doesn't seem like such a thoughtful person. Could it be that she thinks I'll get in her way so she got me to go by this way? Un, that sounds a lot more believable.

As we chatted, we had now reached the halfway mark. As we climbed higher, I realised that only the beginning of the slope was steep. The higher we climbed, the gentler it got, and when we reached the peak, we found a spacious green plateau.

The moment I reached the peak, I collapsed to the ground and panted to catch my breath. For someone like me who doesn't have a strong constitution and doesn't like exercise, intense physical activity is truly abhorrent.

"My lord, come and have look here. Looks like the Cao army encampment is just ahead."

Un?

I crawled up and walked over to Zi Long's side and looked in the direction where she was pointing at. In the distance, there were dots that looked like tents with pillars of smoke rising here and there.

"Oh~~" I sighed in amazement, "So that is Guandu."

So Yun Chang and the rest are over there huh... I've always thought that it was veyr far, but it was actually very near.

But from what we've seen, it doesn't seem like Meng De has any plans to retreat as there doesn't seem to be any big movements in the encampment.

"Oi! My lord!"

"Un? What is the matter?"

Zi Long's frantic voice made me recover and I could hear the sounds of battle from nearby.

"My lord, below!" Zi Long pointed at the other side of the mountain, the side which the narrow pathway led to, "Yan Liang seems to have engaged with the enemy."

Un?! Could it be that Meng De has stationed scouts here?

I poked my head out to get a better look, and saw that half of Yan Liang's forces were engaged in battle with the Cao army while the other half were stuck in the narrow pathway. This situation is very disadvantageous for Yan Liang.

"What do we do, my lord?!"

"Of course we're heading down to save her!" As I said so, Zi Long nodded even though she was still worried about my safety.

"Soldiers! Follow me down and charge!" Zi Long yelled out and gathered the scattered troops before charging down.

Kill!!!

I was with Zi Long at the front, and wave after wave of shouts resounded in my ears. Even though I've been through many battles already, I still can't get used to these crazed shouts.

When they heard us, the Cao army troops to the back panicked and were unsure where to concentrate their attention on. And just as they were panicking, we had now charged down the slope and were headed straight for them.

As our troops clashed swords with theirs, the surround was complete.

"My lord, be careful of stray arrows. Don't advance too much." I and Zi Long had charged into the enemy formation but Zi Long was standing in front of me to protect me.

Zi Long roared and swept out her silver spear, knocking aside several Cao troops that had charged at us like autumn leaves.

It was a simple movement but I could tell that there was much blood, sweat and tears that went into much practice for this move to be perfected.

I'm not sure if I'm used to scenes of slaughter but the fear and terror in my mind has been completely suppressed.

"Zi Long, where did you learn your martial arts?!"

"From my master," Zi Long said as she swung out her silver spear in a single, slick movement, "My master is Tong Yuan, and is quite renowned for his mastery in martial arts."

(TL: I don't know much about Tong Yuan, but he was supposedly also master to Zhang Ren and Zhang Xiu.)

Tong Yuan... That name sounds familiar...

Dong!!!

Just as I was somewhat relaxed, a loud bang shook me to the bones.

What was that?

"Be careful, my lord. The one who made that sound cannot be someone ordinary." Zi Long went on high alert and readied her stance.

Neigh~~~~~

"What!"

In the next instant, a loud cry from a horse tore through the noises and 50 paces away, a warrior appeared. Before we could catch a good glimpse of the warrior, the scent of danger was headed right for us.

Dong!!!

Another sound... Looks like it's the sound of the warrior landing.

And immediately after that sound, many soldiers from in front were hurled up to the sky while even more retreated,

"Don't retreat! Don't turn back!" Zi Long yelled out but they wouldn't listen, "Kuh, it's difficult to give orders to troops that aren't ours to begin with as expected!"

No, even if they were our own troops, I feel that it would be difficult to get them to obey orders when they are this affected by fear.

I myself was unable to do anything at this tumultuous scene before me. All I could do was watch as it unfolded before me. But for some reason, a familiar figure came to mind.

Neigh~~~~~

Another neigh...

“Be careful, my lord, that person is coming!” Just as Zi Long finished her words, it felt like the sky above me became dark in an instant. I raised my head to take a look and saw a large, chestnut-red horse cover the sun. In the blink of an eye, that person was now behind me.

“Ya!” Zi Long saw an opening and seized the chance to stab.

The stab was fast as lightning, but with the sound of a clear and crisp ring, it was blocked by that person, who gave a ‘hmph!’ before swatting away Zi Long’s silver spear, forcing Zi Long to step back.

At this moment, that person stood still. What filled my eyes was that person’s weapon which I could see clearly now— It was a double-sided halberd.

“Let me ask you,” Just then, that person began to speak, “Are you the commander for this...”

She stopped mid-sentence and I raised my head to look at the owner of the voice instinctively.

She was wearing a set of glorious coat armour, and had a stern look on her face. She had a domineering aura, but this did not detract her marvellous beauty in the least. Her deep eyes had a razor sharp glance as always, but it was at odds with the look of surprise she had on now.

“Xuan De!?”

“Feng Xian!!”

In the next instant, we both blurted each other’s names.

Chapter 31: Don't tell me this is the Battle of Mount Jiluo (3)

TL: Please see this: [Announcement](#). Finally someone asks MC that kind of question... He screws it up of course.

Liu Bei POV

Feng Xian's halberd fell with a clatter onto the ground.

"Xuan De!?" Feng Xian called my name out once more as she dismounted and stared right at me.

Was it really Feng Xian?

I didn't dare to believe what I was seeing, and could only tell Zi Long to lower her spear.

I dazedly took a step forward as I looked right at Feng Xian as she looked at me.

"..." She came forward step by step hurriedly as well.

"Feng..." I was about to call out her name once more, but before I finished, she hugged me tightly.

Feng Xian bent down slightly and wrapped her arms around my neck before putting her whole body weight on me. I'd always thought Feng Xian's armour would be heavy but it was surprisingly light. She held on to me tightly and rested her face on my shoulders, making it impossible for me to move at all. I spied on her face and saw that there was a weak smile on her but she was biting her lower chin, and looked like she was holding back tears. Though she was taller than me, and slightly older as well, she seemed like a little girl at this time.

As I looked at Feng Xian, I slowly stretched my hand out and rubbed her head.

"Feng Xian, it's alright, I'm here."

"Un, it's not just me. Everyone in Xuchang is worried about you as well," Feng Xian slowly put her hands on my shoulders as she got up and looked at me for a

while before exhaling, “But I can finally relax now that I see my lord is fine.”

“Are Yun Chang and the rest alright?”

“Un, everyone is fine. My lord need not worry.” Feng Xian nodded, her eyes never leaving me for a moment.

“What the heck, so you already knew my lord huh?” Zi Long sighed as she looked on at us from the side.

“Un?” Only now did Feng Xian seem to realise that Zi Long wasn’t an ordinary soldier, “My lord, this is...”

“I forgot to introduce you.” I slapped my head when I realised it, and hurriedly introduced the 2 to each other, “This is Zhao Yun Zhao Zi Long. She recently joined us and was formerly Gongsun Zan’s subordinate general. Zi Long, this is Lu Bu Lu Feng Xian.”

“Ah, we met before in Hulao Pass.” Zi Long said and saluted Feng Xian, “I look forward to working with you.”

“Oh.” Feng Xian saluted her as well and nodded as she frowned.

Because time was tight, I only briefly told the 2 of them what each of them had to know and heaved a sigh of relief when I saw that they understood.

It was good that they didn’t actually start duelling for real, or they would both be injured badly.

“Another one came huh...” Feng Xian sighed, and began muttering.

“Un? Feng Xian, did you say something?”

“No, nothing.”

“My lord need not think too much about that. I think it will be very difficult for my lord to understand with that blockheaded nature of yours.” Zi Long seemed to understand what Feng Xian meant though, and shook her head as she admonished me with a meaningful smile. But she quickly withdrew the smile and said with seriousness, “But Lord Lu Bu, what are your plans from now?”

“Un? My plans?” Feng Xian said as she tilted her head to the side, “One more, one less doesn’t matter. We agreed on a fair competition so I have no

objections.”

Un? What is Feng Xian talking about again?

“That’s not what I meant...” Zi Long said as she smiled helplessly, and pointed at our surroundings, “I was asking how and when do you plan on rejoining our lord.”

“Right now,” Feng Xian answered immediately, “I’ll join my lord now and return to Yuan Shao. When they hear that I have joined Yuan Shao, Lord Guan Yu and the rest will definitely understand why and come over as well.”

“No way that can work!” Zi Long shook her head anxiously and looked about before pulling the 2 of us to a more secluded area.

After we were at the edge of the battlefield, she stopped and said, “Lord Lu Bu killed Yuan Shao’s favoured general Wen Chou. If you join just like that, won’t you incur the wrath of Yuan Shao?”

That’s right, Feng Xian killed Wen Chou. If she joins Yuan Shao, she will probably be killed.

“Un...” Feng Xian went silent and thought for a long while before she continued, “I’ll go back to camp then, and discuss it over with everyone, before coming over together.”

“But I heard from our lord that there are still our lord’s people in Xuchang right?” Zi Long shook her head as she continued, “If you’re going to come, then you have to bring them along as well right?”

Un... I hadn’t thought about all that but after hearing Zi Long’s analysis, it does seem to be very troublesome indeed.

“Never mind, I don’t know how to deal with such complicated matters,” Feng Xian thought for a while before giving up, and picked up her halberd before mounting her horse, “In any case, I’ll head back to Guandu first. Lord Guan Yu and Wen Yuan are much smarter than me so I’ll discuss it over with them first.”

As she said so, Feng Xian made to leave the battlefield without bothering about the battle at all.

“You’re not going to wait for the battle to end?”

"No, since I've found Xuan De, there is no point fighting this meaningless battle any further." Feng Xian raised her halberd and spun it in her hands before pointing it at Zi Long all of a sudden, "I'm not very happy about this, but I'll entrust my lord with you for the time being."

"Un, I'll do that even without you asking." Zi Long smiled and pushed the halberd away with her spear, "Well then, take care Lord Lu Bu."

Feng Xian nodded, and turned her horse—

"Feng Xian, you..."

"Ah, umm, Xuan De..."

Feng Xian suddenly turned back, and wanted to tell me something, while I too called out to her at the same time.

"Eh!" "Ah..."

In that instant, our eyes met, and we both hurriedly turned away.

"Xuan De, you must remember to take care of yourself. We'll be with you in a while."

"Un. Feng Xian must take care as well. Please also send my regards to the rest."

Feng Xian did not turn back, and slapped her horse as she galloped off.

Looking at Feng Xian's back, I began feeling sad. We had finally met after a long while and much difficulty only to separate again so quickly. I wonder when we will meet again.

"My lord."

"Un?"

"Leaving aside everyone else, who do you think is better, me or Lord Lu Bu?" Just then, Zi Long asked me seriously as she looked at the distant Feng Xian.

Un... Feng Xian and Zi Long huh?

"Zi Long mustn't get angry when I say my answer." I thought for a long while before slowly giving my answer, "Though I haven't seen you both fight each other for real, when it comes to martial arts, Feng Xian should be better... Ouch!"

Why do you have to hit me?"

My head was suddenly knocked by the blunt end of the spear, which made me see stars.

"You deserved it, my lord." Zi Long said as she raised her spear and headed back to the battlefield.

I shakily followed after her, and heard her softly mutter— "Blockhead."

After we returned to the battlefield, the battle ended shortly as the Cao army side's numerical disadvantage was far too great without the help of Feng Xian. But because a large number of troops were trapped in the narrow pathway, neither side was able to decisively win and so the Battle of Mount Jiluo ended in a draw. And from the intelligence gathered, it seems like Meng De has no plans on withdrawing.

Though it was only a small skirmish, it was very important to me as I was able to see with my own eyes that Feng Xian was alright and hear that everyone was safe and sound.

Perhaps we can all get together again very soon. So I thought on the way back.

And after that, Cao Ren intercepted more supply caravans which greatly angered Ben Chu, but that's another matter.

Chapter 32: Don't tell me this is riding alone for thousands of miles (1)

Yun Chang POV

Just as I was sitting in my tent in Guandu reading a book, Lu Bu suddenly came barging in. She had neither taken off her coat armour nor had she kept her halberd. I looked at her, and saw that she was panting and looking very excited.

I'd heard a while ago from Wen Yuan that Lu Bu was deployed with Cao Ren but I didn't think she would be back so soon.

"Lord Lu Bu, what has gotten you so riled up?" I asked as I put down the book in my hands and got up with the intention of getting a bowl of wine for her.

"Lord Guan Yu..." Lord Lu Bu said excitedly between pants, "I saw Xuan De out on the battlefield."

"Eh?" When I heard what Lu Bu said, my head went blank and I lost strength in my hands. Only when I heard a clear clang did I realise that the bowl in my hands had fallen to the ground. Only after a long while did I recover from my shock.

She saw... Big brother?!

"Lord Lu Bu did you say you saw big brother!" I stepped up close to Lu Bu, "Did you speak with big brother?"

"Un un, I did." Lu Bu showed a rare smile when she saw how happy I was, "Xuan De is doing well, and is with Yuan Shao now."

Doing well... Un, it's good so long as big brother is doing well.

I nodded as I could finally set aside my worries, "Lord Lu Bu, have you notified everyone else yet?!"

"Not yet, I came here first and am about to go tell the others." Lu Bu said as she took off her thick coat armour, "We finally know where Xuan De is. In a while, I'll make the preparations to go to Xuchang and get those 2..."

"Gan Qing and Mi Zhen?"

"Right, I'll bring those 2 along as well." By this time, she had already taken off her armour and was in light clothing, "At that time, we can all go to where Xuan De is together."

As she said so, Lu Bu turned to leave.

"Ah, Lord Lu Bu, please stop!" I hurriedly grabbed her arm when I saw she was about to leave.

"Un? What is it?"

After thinking about it calmly, things don't seem to be so simple.

"Lord Lu Bu... Will Lord Cao Cao let us go so easily?" I said with a troubled look, "Moreover, we've killed Yuan Shao's subordinate generals. If we join them now, it will be difficult to trust us and we will bring a great deal of trouble to big brother."

After hearing what I said, Lu Bu slapped her forehead in realisation, "Aiya! Zhao Yun said the same thing just now as well... What do we do now~~~"

I heard a surprising name from Lu Bu's words, "Un? Lord Lu Bu, who was that you just mentioned?"

"Zhao Yun? Zhao Yun seems to have joined Xuan De and is now accompanying Xuan De." Lu Bu smiled bitterly when she saw my expression, "I know what you want to say."

Zhao Yun huh... Un, I feel more at ease with her by big brother's side but in a certain sense, I feel even more uneasy~

Hai, what conflicted feelings.

"Let's leave that aside for now," I shook my head and placed the important things ahead of my own feelings for now, "Lord Lu Bu, go and tell Wen Yuan and Hua Tuo first. I'll deal with the matter of Xuchang."

"Alright, got it." Lu Bu agreed but she did not leave and looked at me with a frown, "But... Lord Guan Yu, what are you going to do?"

I walked to the side and put on the green silk robe that Lord Cao Cao gave me before putting on the one from big brother on top. I thought it would be bulky and cumbersome but it was surprisingly comfortable and fitting.

"I'll go find Lord Cao Cao." I slowly said, "And hope she will let us go."

The only way to do this is to ask directly.

Hu... I breathed out as I stood outside Lord Cao Cao's tent.

There were the 3 requests, and we did achieve much success in battles for them so I should not be so worried.

"Is it Lord Guan Yu who is standing outside?"

Wu! Did she see me?

"... Yes." I slowly parted the curtains and saw that there were 2 people inside. Lord Cao Cao was sitting behind the table and the other was a girl I had not seen before.

She wore a set of grey robes and her hands were tucked in her sleeves as she quietly stood there. Her hair was long and was not combed neatly. If one drew some motifs on her face, she would look like a deity that descended to earth. Speaking of which, why are her eyes closed? Is she asleep?

"What is the matter today? It's rare for Lord Guan Yu to be the one to come to me uninvited." Lord Cao Cao got up and slowly walked over as she said so.

Big brother... I don't know if it's out of nervousness but I began calling for big brother in my heart.

Ah, no way about it, all I can do is say it!

"Lord Cao Cao, I've come here today to resign from service." I saluted her and lowered my head as I said so, "I've just received news of big brother and am planning to leave for where he is immediately. I beseech Lord Cao Cao to let me go and permit me to return to Xuchang and gather my belongings and other companions before I leave."

I closed my eyes when I finished, not daring to raise my head and look at Lord Cao Cao. Eventually I opened my eyes but stayed in a bow and looked at Lord Cao Cao's skirt in front of me.

Should I have said some more? Or perhaps I should have bandied my achievements a bit...

Just as I was frantically thinking about what to do next, Lord Cao Cao gave a single loud clap and spoke out–

“Men, come in!”

Chapter 33: Don't tell me this is riding alone for thousands of miles (2)

TL: Changed up the site a little, should be easier to navigate. If you were always wondering what everyone saw in MC, this chapter nails it. Of course, the one who gets it is (almost) everyone's favourite...

Yun Chang POV

"Lord Cao Cao!" I hurriedly stepped forward when I saw things about to turn bad and wanted to defuse the situation, "We had an agreement! I have already..."

"There is no need to say any further." Lord Cao Cao cut me off and raised a hand to stop me, "You just need to wait here for a moment."

Kuh... Does she intend on locking me up? I never thought that Lord Cao Cao would go back on her words. If that's the case, then we can only forcefully break out like Lu Bu said. But if we do that, then what we will do with Gan Qing and Mi Zhen?! Or should I try and alleviate the situation first?

I couldn't decide on what to do, and my grip tightened.

"Lord Guan Yu, I am very grateful for your service in this period." Lord Cao Cao said as she stepped forward and helped me up. I slowly looked at Lord Cao Cao and saw that she was still smiling as usual.

"Then Lord Cao Cao should permit us to leave..."

"No need to rush, there's a lot of time." Lord Cao Cao said as she placed her hands at her back and walked to the entrance of the tent. I turned back and saw that Lord Cao Cao had parted the curtains and was looking outside.

Hai, looks like we can't leave. I'd thought that doing things properly would work but it seems like I was too naive. It's a good thing there are no guards here so if we're lucky, it might be possible to charge out of Guandu and make it to Xuchang if I can get in touch with Lu Bu and the rest. Then, all we have to do is to reach Xuchang before the couriers and get Gan Qing and Mi Zhen out...

"Un, they're here." Just then, Lord Cao Cao behind me said these words.

I turned and saw the curtains being parted and 2 people were escorted in by a soldier. I looked at the 2 people and breathed in deeply, "Gan Qing?! Mi Zhen?! Why are you both here?!"

"I brought them here." Before either of them could answer me, Lord Cao Cao replied with a smile and walked over to Mi Zhen and stroked her head.

"Are you all alright?" I felt uneasy and hurriedly asked them.

"We're okay, what's wrong?" Gan Qing said as she pulled Mi Zhen close. From their faces, I couldn't see any cause for concern.

I frowned as I looked at Lord Cao Cao in puzzlement. Could it be that Lord Cao Cao plans to use them as hostages...

"I've brought them here for you already." Lord Cao Cao said, interrupting my thoughts, and walked over as she clapped my shoulder, "Since you're going to leave, then just leave directly. Don't go back to Xuchang."

... Eh?

I wasn't able to understand what she meant. "That is... This..."

"Un? Is there a problem?" Lord Cao Cao tilted her head, puzzled at my hesitation, "Aren't you all going to find Xuan De? Since you know where he is, then you all should go."

"But, I thought—"

"You thought I'd use them as hostages to make you all stay?" Lord Cao Cao gave an evil smile as she completely grasped what I was thinking in one sentence, "Didn't I say it before? You can leave once you learn of Xuan De's whereabouts. Why? Afraid I might break my promise?"

"No..." My voice grew soft as I was completely suppressed by Lord Cao Cao.

So I've been thinking too much all along? I can't believe I suspected her even though I've known her for so long... How unsightly of me.

"Eh?! Sister Guan knows where Xuan De is?!" Gan Qing exclaimed as she looked at me in surprise. Seeing how excited Gan Qing was, I suppressed my own

excitement and nodded.

“Ah... That’s great.”

“What!? We’re going to go find big brother Xuan De?!”

Gan Qing and Mi Zhen were extremely happy, to the point where they began shedding tears. It’s no wonder though, given that they haven’t seen big brother since we left for Yuan Shu.

“Well then, on behalf of everyone, thank you Lord Cao Cao.” I turned to her and saluted.

“Un, no need for such formalities.” Lord Cao Cao smiled and left my side as she returned to her seat behind the desk and picked up her brush as she returned to her scrolls.

After having a good look at her, I found that Lord Cao Cao seemed a little more tired than usual.

Meng De POV

As I watched them exit the tent, regret began to fill my heart. Leaving aside Guan Yu, that Lu Bu and Zhang Liao are definitely not weaker than Guan Yu. And there is also the medical genius Hua Tuo. Losing all of them is truly a waste.

But this can’t be helped since they will always be Xuan De’s cards and not mine.

“Is my lord going to let them go just like that? You know that Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao.”

Just then, Jia Xu, who had remained silent all this while, spoke up. Her voice was as low as always, and her tone always felt like what she spoke about was unrelated to herself.

“Yes... Their wills are resolute and they can’t be kept.” I said with melancholy before sighing, “Moreover, Xuan De won’t be so zealous in helping Yuan Shao once Guan Yu and the rest reunite with Xuan De.”

“Isn’t my lord afraid that releasing them will end up causing harm to us down the road?”

"Though you may be very good at scheming, your understanding of people is not as good as mine." I smiled towards her as I said so only to find that she still had her eyes closed and felt disappointed, "Who do you think is the most dangerous person in Xuan De's bloc?"

"... If my lord is asking it like this, then you should have reached the answer long ago. Why bother testing me?"

This fellow really doesn't know how to keep a conversation going. Of course, I can't deny that I did indeed want to show off my abilities.

"I think that, the most dangerous person in Xuan De's bloc is Xuan De himself."

"And why is that?"

"Though Xuan De has good judgement and analytical abilities, he lacks an understanding of combat strategies and tactics. His skill with martial arts is also lacking, and is even worse than an ordinary general." I raised my brush and began to write a scroll to be sent to Xuchang. Though I may be in the frontlines, I still have to give timely Court reports, "But there is one thing about Xuan De which even I find it hard to achieve."

"That he is a man?"

"Jia Xu, that joke isn't funny at all." I lightly coughed, hoping that she could be a little more serious, "Xuan De's greatest strength is that he can change people."

If I'm not mistaken, the reason why Ben Chu's losses have been much less than what I have expected would be because of Xuan De's effect on her. For Ben Chu to only have suffered minimal losses thus far would mean that either she fixed that problematic personality of hers on her own volition or someone else influenced her to do so.

And the only one who can do that, in my opinion, is Xuan De. If Xuan De himself stops putting in maximal effort for Ben Chu, then the greatest stumbling block to my victory will be cleared.

And it is also because of how Xuan De is that he can attract talents of all sorts, that he can go far.

"Can't my lord change others as well?"

“That’s very difficult...” I shook my head as I smiled bitterly, “The person I really did change was just E Lai. But she is no longer around.”

I couldn’t help but feel sad once more as I thought of her. If E Lai was still alive, this war with Ben Chu would probably be easier.

“Speaking of which,” As I looked at Jia Xu, I couldn’t help but feel curious, “I’m curious, what did Feng Xiao say to you?”

Jia Xu only just arrived from Xuchang yesterday, along with Zhang Xiu. Both were convinced by Feng Xiao. God knows what words Feng Xiao used to bamboozle them into serving me.

“Nothing much, we just had some everyday normal conversation.” Jia Xu said in that low tone of hers that sounded more like that of a mature woman even though she was about the same age as me, “If you must know why I joined you, then all I can say is— I feel that you are stronger than Yuan Shao. That’s all.”

“Un? You seem rather confident about that.”

“My lord may be good at judging people, but your reading of situations is not as good as mine.” Jia Xu said sarcastically as she opened her eyes and smiled at me. Her eyes looked like those of a predator and emitted a dangerous, evil aura. No matter how I looked, those weren’t the eyes of an administrative official.

Jia Xu huh... Another strange fellow. As I thought so, I smiled back at her as well.

Speaking of which... I seemed to have forgotten something.

Chapter 34: Don't tell me this is the last chapter of volume 4

TL: Next up is a 6 part extra story, it's really cute and the MC actually gets some action (sort of).

Yun Chang POV

"Lord Lu Bu, are Gan Qing and Mi Zhen settled in yet?"

I brought the horse out of the stables and bumped into Lu Bu who had also come to take a horse. Lu Bu seems to be looking particularly refreshed.

Does she hate Lord Cao Cao? ... Though I don't really like her myself.

"I left it to Wen Yuan." Lu Bu slowly said as she entered the stables and looked for her horse, "It might be strange to say this all of a sudden but I can't quite get along with anyone else besides Wen Yuan."

"Eh?" Now that she said it, I realised that I hadn't seen Lu Bu having good relations with anyone else, "Are they difficult to deal with?"

Lu Bu thought for a moment before shaking her head, "If I had to put a reason to it, then it can only be that I'm difficult to get along with."

"Eh?"

"There's nothing to be surprised about. Both you and Wen Yuan are warriors so you don't feel anything." She brought her horse out as she continued, "But to normal people, I'm probably an existence that's difficult to approach."

Of course, apart from Xuan De.

She added thereafter.

Indeed, most ordinary people would feel that Lu Bu is a dangerous existence.

Wang! Just then, a small bark could be heard from Lu Bu's chest, and a small furball began to poke its head through her breastplate as it extended its red tongue and panted.

It's been a few days since I've seen Red Hare and it feels like it's grown a fair bit.

"..." Lu Bu silently stroked Red Hare's head and the cold, stern look melted into a kind, loving one.

Even though she looks so kind at such times, I thought and then shook my head. Big brother is probably the only ordinary person who can see this side of Lu Bu.

Un?

"Lord Lu Bu... This horse of yours is really big."

It wasn't just huge, its bright red mane and fur were rather off-putting.

"Un? Ah, I used this horse to escape when I killed Dong Zhuo. Seems like it's his personal horse." Lu Bu said as she stroked the horse's mane, "I wanted to name this horse Red Hare but I changed my mind after I met this little critter in Hulao Pass." Lu Bu rubbed Red Hare's head as she said so.

(TL: Yes, the horse is supposed to be the Red Hare.)

"Would Lord Guan Yu be interested in it? If you are, you are welcome to take it for a ride. It's not a tame one though~"

"Un, when we get the chance." I hurriedly put it off.

Wouldn't it be embarrassing if I fell off such a big horse? I smiled bitterly at myself as I thought so.

As I brought my horse out of the stables with Lu Bu and headed to the eastern exit, I saw that Wen Yuan was already waiting there for a long while.

"Wen Yuan~" I called out as I slowly brought the horse over, "How is it? Have Gan Qing and Mi Zhen settled in already?"

"Oh, they're on the carriage behind." Wen Yuan said as relief spread across her face, "I really was shocked when I heard the news about our lord (Liu Bei)~ I didn't think he would meet with my lord (Lu Bu) on the battlefield."

Looks like Wen Yuan was very happy as well.

"Wait for me!"

Un?

I turned back and saw Hua Tuo dragging her thick clothing behind as she ran over. Even though it was winter now, steam was rising from her head which was drenched in sweat.

“Lord Hua Tuo what were you up to?”

“Haa... Haa... Nothing much,” Hua Tuo said between pants as she waved her hands, “I’ve just been more occupied with treating Lord Guo Jia, and went to make a few more servings of medicine before we leave.”

Lord Guo Jia huh... Isn’t she that girl who’s always coughing up blood?”

“How is Lord Guo Jia’s status?”

Hua Tuo sighed when she heard what I said. “Her lung disease is too advanced for my medicine have too much of an effect. I want to cure her but I’m afraid nothing short of a long period of rest and recovery will help.”

She pointed at the surroundings before continuing, “And with such a dusty environment with frequent cold winds, it’s already a miracle that Lord Guo Jia’s condition has not deteriorated further.”

“Un... Is she working too hard?” I thought back to when we first reached Guandu and how Guo Jia was always busy with something, “Let’s leave that aside for now. We need to leave soon or it will be dark out.”

Though Hua Tuo was still concerned about Guo Jia’s illness, she eventually got up onto the carriage after a moment’s hesitation.

I did not let Hua Tuo ride a horse as she always slipped about even though she knew how to ride one. I felt that it wasn’t too safe and it would be better if she just went on the carriage with Gan Qing and Mi Zhen instead.

“Ah... I can see Xuan De again soon...” Hua Tuo muttered as she got on the carriage, “It’s been such a long time, I wonder how his health has been holding up.”

Looks like she really is a physician through and through.

“Lord Guan Yu,” Someone called out to me as they ran over. I looked over and saw that it was Xiahou Dun, “I heard you all were leaving. The Imperial

Chancellor sent me to see you off. Here, take this. This should tide you over for any expenses along the way.”

As she said so, a soldier nearby came up and loaded a small box onto the carriage.

“You’re too generous.” I saluted as I said so. Lu Bu and Wen Yuan who were behind me saluted as well.

“I won’t try and keep you all,” Xiahou Dun saluted as she said so, “Northward will see many battles and skirmishes so you should head east and only turn north after you reach the Yellow River.”

I nodded, and thanked Xiahou Dun. I got on my horse and turned my head back and looked at the Cao encampment as I began to leave. I turned back to look ahead, and felt like big brother wa just ahead, waiting for us to return to his side.

Liu Bei POV

“My lord, our supplies are running low. If our supply lines keep getting raided then we won’t make it past this year.” Ju Shou said worriedly.

“Un... Feng Ji, what are you doing with the supplies? How many times has it been already?”

“Tian Yuan Hao! Y, you’re just blaming me because your plan isn’t working!”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“Don’t try and turn it back on me! If our supplies weren’t raided, we would have...”

Pa! The table was slammed yet again. There was no need to confirm it, Ben Chu was definitely angry again.

“Alright, don’t say anymore.”

Un? Why is she so even-tempered? I was puzzled and looked over to see that she was looking at the map on the table, deep in thought.

“My lord?” Feng Ji went up and probed when she saw that Ben Chu did not continue speaking.

“I’ve decided!”

“Eek!” Ben Chu’s sudden yell gave Feng Ji a shock.

I looked over and saw that Ben Chu was pointing at one spot on the map and was smiling as she stood there.

“No more sneaking about. We will now form a surround with infantry and press forward, thereafter...” Ben Chu flicked her beautiful, luscious hair back, looking more confident than ever before as she continued, “We use our brains and finish this on the plains here.”

After Ben Chu finished, all the officials and generals crowded forward to see where she was pointing at. As for me, I didn’t need to do so as I already knew where it would be.

— Guandu.

What was unexpected was that Ben Chu suddenly clasped her hands in front of her chest and saluted her subordinates. It felt very out of place as this was the first time I’ve ever seen Ben Chu salute her subordinates.

Just as everyone was still in a state of shock, Ben Chu continued—

“I’m counting on everyone for this battle!”

Meng De POV

Ah...

“My lord? What is the matter?” Jia Xu asked coldly.

“Ah, no. It’s nothing.” I did my best to cover it up and waved my hands as I picked up a scroll and pretended to read it.

I finally remembered it, the thing I’d forgotten.

I forgot to give Guan Yu and the rest an exit permit...

Extra Story

Part 1

By now, I was used to how bleak Liyang was. There were tens of thousands of soldiers stationed here and now that we were in a standoff, everyone was bored and were less alert as a result. Some people played Cuju, others played chess, and because the army had almost equal numbers of men and women, there were a fair number of couples. It wasn't surprising that some soldiers would use this chance to date and advance their relationships. However, the atmosphere just wasn't there with the cold winter and the dry air.

(TL: Cuju is the earliest recognised form of football. If you watched the Red Cliff movie, you will know how it looks like.)

As for me, I was summoned to Ben Chu's tent first thing in the morning for god knows what.

What could it be...

"Xuan De... It's okay now." After about 20 minutes, Ben Chu pulled open the curtains and poked out her head, "Dang dang dang dang!"

Seeing that she had drawn my attention, she parted open the curtains and revealed a set of luxurious clothes.

I don't know what the official name for these clothes are but they are much more luxurious than any ordinary clothing I've seen before. I've seen Ben Chu in similar clothing before but this set was the best fit.

"How is it? Does it suit me?" Ben Chu said as she struck poses with her curvaceous body.

"Un, it suits you." I nodded.

I'm not sure if it's her aura but these clothes wouldn't bring out the beauty in anyone, and wouldn't feel right on someone like Yi De for example.

"That's it?" But to Ben Chu, my opinion was not satisfying to her, "Come on, praise me more~~" Ben Chu pouted as she said so.

“I don’t really know what to say...”

So what she summoned me for was just to see her new clothes... Sometimes, I really don’t understand how girls think.

(TL: Sometimes is an understatement.)

“Xuan De doesn’t know how to make a girl happy at all~” Ben Chu said helplessly as she pointed her folding hand at me, “Shouldn’t you come up with some flattery at a time like this?”

“That huh... Perhaps I should have.”

“Hai~~” Ben Chu sighed, “How are you going to get others to do things for you if you’re like this huh~”

When I heard this, I couldn’t help but smile bitterly.

How should I put it? ... Yes, I’ve received training in that area before.

After hearing what Ben Chu said, I couldn’t help but think back to the beginning of my return to Xu state after the slaying of Che Zhou.

... Yaw~~~n.

It was about to be autumn soon and the weather was clear as I sat in the town hall doing nothing. The words in the scroll just wouldn’t enter my eyes as I stretched my back and yawned.

As the saying goes, autumn is a good time for sleeping. Though many strange things tended to happen in autumn, people don’t pay much attention as they are too lethargic. And autumn days as nice as today are truly comfortable.

Though this era uses the Lunar calendar, if I were to think of it in terms of a Gregorian calendar, it should be National day soon. That said, it’s been like a holiday every day since I returned to Xu state since I basically do nothing every day.

“... My lord, have you finished the documents?”

“Ahem... Un, I’m doing them now.” I jolted up and took a scroll which I pretended to read when I heard Gong You’s voice.

Did Gong You come in through the back door? She really was quiet about it.

“Un...” Gong You came over and looked at me, “It hasn’t moved at all.”

She saw through me?!

I turned back and looked at Gong You with trepidation and saw that she was frowning and looked like she did not know what she should do.

“Gong You, show me some mercy.” I put down the scroll and began pleading with Gong You, “When it comes to these scrolls, I can’t read them nor do I know how I should deal with them. What do you want me to do~”

“Un... I guess I can help...”

“Really?!”

“But I don’t know how to explain it to Zi Zhong and Xian He...”

What Gong You was referring to was the arrangement the Xu state 3 made on their own to watch over me in turn so that I would concentrate on my work.

But what the heck... Am I a prisoner?

“Gong You, help me out here...”

“I came here to check things out because I was worried, and found a problem as expected.” Just as I was about to successfully persuade her, a lazy voice came in from outside. I looked out and saw xiao Yong with her clothes in a state of disarray walking in as she dragged her shoes.

From her state of attire, she probably just woke up.

“Eh? Why is xiao Yong here?”

More trouble is here, I thought.

“Xuan De is always being like that. Whenever you meet with something that doesn’t go easily, you seek help from others. How are you going to grow up huh~~” Xiao Yong admonished me before turning to Gong You, “Gong You you are another one. How can you be convinced by this level of persuasion by Xuan De?”

“... Wu.” Gong You’s expression became sullen as she took a step back from the mental blow by xiao Yong.

“Eh? Did xiao Yong hear everything?”

"Of course I have! I've been squatting outside for almost half an hour now!"

This person really has a lot of free time huh.

"Alright alright~ I'll do my work." I gave up and picked up a scroll.

"No!" But Xiao Yong immediately rejected what I said.

"Then what do you want from me..."

Tch tch tch. Xiao Yong shook her index finger at me as though she were lecturing me as a proper adult member of society, though in my eyes she was just a girl about my age.

"Xuan De, before you learn how to do work, you must learn how to deal with people."

"Deal with people?"

"Not everyone will be easy-going as Gong You. What Xuan De has to do is to learn how to get along with people, and after that, how to convince people to help you do things willingly."

"... Wu." Gong You took another step back as she suffered yet another mental blow from being used as a bad example.

Xiao Yong seems to really know what she's talking about, almost as if it's from personal experience... Eh? Wait, does that mean this is how she always gets to slack off?

"In any case, what Xuan De has to do now is to practice how to make someone promise to do something for you."

"Eh? Like just now?"

"Gong You's difficulty is way too low. Of course, mine is too high." Xiao Yong looked outside as she said so, "Un... I have to find someone suitable..."

What? She's already looking for someone? I haven't even agreed to it!

"Wait, what about the work?"

"That stuff isn't important!"

Eh?!~~~~~

(TL: Try and guess who the character is for this extra story.)

Part 2

"Xuan De, Lord Zhang Fei told me to ask you what you want to have for lunch." Just then, a cold voice came from outside.

I looked over and saw Feng Xian, wearing plain clothing with her usual icy aura, slowly walk into the room.

Though she doesn't mean it, it feels like she's here to challenge me to a duel. Un, this is probably her nature, and it probably won't be easy for her to change that domineering aura of hers.

"Found it!"

"If you have anything you feel like eating, I can go to the market and... Un? What is it, Lord Jian Yong?" Feng Xian frowned when she saw xiao Yong point at her with a look of elation.

"Wu," Xiao Yong withdrew and hid behind me when she met with Feng Xian's glance directly, "Xuan De, I think Lord Lu Bu is a good candidate."

Eh?~~~~~

"Gong You..." Xiao Yong called out softly and Gong You nodded in understanding and went over and offered tea to Feng Xian.

Seeing that Feng Xian was now occupied with Gong You, xiao Yong continued. "Xuan De, don't give me that look. Lord Lu Bu may not be a very approachable person but she is the most suitable person for this."

"No, that's not what I meant."

"No need to say anymore, Xuan De." Xiao Yong shook her head as she smiled, "All Xuan De has to do is to use that glib tongue of yours and get Lord Lu Bu to do something within today... Un..."

Xiao Yong hadn't thought of what she wanted me to get Feng Xian to do yet and sank into thought. For some reason, I had an ominous feeling.

"Here's some tea, Lord Lu Bu." Just then, Gong You brought a cup of tea to Feng Xian who was now sitting beside the table.

“Un...” Feng Xian nodded, and drank her tea in big gulps as she picked up her cup before sighing, “It’s a little too hot. My lips and tongue are beginning to sting.”

Then blow it before drinking! It was so hot that her eyes are already tearing but all that appeared on her face was a slight frown.

“Right!!” Xiao Yong seems to have been inspired by god knows what and she clapped before whispering in my ear in a very soft voice, “You must get Lord Lu Bu to allow you to kiss her by the end of today.”

What?! I grabbed Xiao Yong’s collar and pulled her in, afraid that Feng Xian had heard what she just said.

“Are you mad?! Why are you saying such nonsense all of a sudden?”

“Don’t worry, what happens will all depend on Xuan De.” Before I could vehemently reject this, Xiao Yong pulled my hands off and turned to Feng Xian, “Lord Lu Bu, Xuan De has something to say to you.”

What... Wait!

“Un? Xuan De has something to say?” Feng Xian put down the cup in her hands and stood up.

“U, umm, that is...”

“Are you stammering because you forgot what you wanted to say? If that’s the case then, I’ll...”

“Wait!” I resolved myself and stopped Feng Xian just as she was about to turn and leave, “Fe, Feng Xian, if you’re free, will you go out with me for a bit?”

Hmph.

A clear, evil scoff from the side made me frown.

I have no idea what’s with me, but I completely fell for Xiao Yong’s manipulations and got swept up.

“So you wanted me to come and buy ingredients for dinner tonight?”

“Un, that’s what I wanted.” I said as I wiped the sweat off my head, feeling relieved that I was able to come up with a suitable reason.

I was presently with Feng Xian in the market. Though I have toured the city on occasion, this is the first time I've come to the market.

But this xiao Yong gave me so much trouble. What am I supposed to do now?!

... But perhaps it is indeed as xiao Yong said. I'm not too good at convincing others so perhaps some practice would do me good.

And I get to skip out on work too.

I looked at Feng Xian, and saw that she was looking about, and secretly opened the silk that xiao Yong gave me. This was a piece of silk which xiao Yong sneakily gave me just before I left the town hall. If I'm not wrong, this should contain a good strategy or at least some tips.

Un, let's see what's written—

[Knowing how indecisive Xuan De is, I bet you can't complete this task~~ By the way, if you fail to complete it, you will be punished~]

I angrily crumpled up the silk.

Damn it! I can't believe xiao Yong is looking down on me! Alright, I'll show you what I can do. No matter what, I'm an impulsive 21st century high schooler. How could I not have personal experiences of dating or at least heard of it?

... Un, I should be able to accomplish the task.

"What does Xuan De plan on buying?"

"Eh?! Ah, umm... Let me see..." I was unable to deal with the sudden question and looked about, hoping to find some inspiration, "Un... Umm, what about you, Feng Xian? What do you like to eat usually?"

Throwing the question back should be good for now. I can learn about what Feng Xian likes and can control the flow of the conversation as well.

"Anything I eat feels the same to me," Feng Xian replied immediately, "Whether it's vegetables or meat."

"Oh? I see..."

"Un."

...

Silence again. If this goes on, I really won't be able to accomplish the task today. Moreover, to have me kiss Feng Xian is really too high a hurdle. No matter what, this isn't the 21st century after all.

"Speaking of which, what's up today? For Xuan De to invite me out." Feng Xian asked as she twirled her fringe, and looked like she was at a loss as to what to do.

Come to think of it, this was the first time I invited her out. Given how sudden it was, it's not strange that she feels that it's weird.

"How should I put it?" I tried to find an appropriate reason within my limited vocabulary, "I guess I felt that it was a bit lonely to buy things alone."

I immediately regretted what I said.

What the heck was that reason?! Won't that kind of girly excuse just invite more suspicion?!

"I see, so that's why you asked me to come along with you." But somehow, Feng Xian accepted it and nodded. For some reason, she seemed to be really happy as well.

Never mind, as long as she doesn't suspect me. Now then, we should go to some places that Feng Xian likes.

"Feng Xian, have you come to the market here before?"

"Un? Ah, yes. I've been here with Lord Guan Yu before." Feng Xian said as she looked at a row of weapons displayed at a blacksmith nearby.

"Were there any places you liked? Any places that made you want to go back?"

"Un? Hmm," Feng Xian replied and began to head towards the row of weapons, "I always just followed along. Nowhere in particular seemed to interest me."

"Eh? Nowhere at all?" I asked as I followed her.

"Un, it's not like I didn't like walking around or I didn't like any of the places we went. It's just that I don't really know anything apart from fighting so I don't really fit in with everyone else." Feng Xian said as she began inspecting the weapons, "But I'm satisfied with things as they are since I never even had the chance to go out with other generals for fun before this."

Feng Xian smiled as she said so but I could tell that her smile had a tinge of loneliness in it. This made me think back to my first conversation with Feng Xian. The Feng Xian now feels more amicable from before but she still felt distant and unapproachable.

Even if it wasn't for the task, I should still do something here to help out Feng Xian as her lord.

She's still a girl after all.

"Feng Xian."

"Un..."

Before she could reply, I pulled her sleeve and led her away from the blacksmith.

No matter what, I just want to make today a happy one for Feng Xian.

Part 3

That said, when you think about it, it's almost impossible to have a good time in this era. Naturally there were no amusement parks, theatres or arcades in the last years of the Eastern Han. People were thankful just to have peace and stability.

Moreover, I don't quite know what girls of this era like to do or where they like to go. I could only keep an eye out as we went along, and hope to find a place which was filled with women.

And now, we had walked into the street which sold cooked food.

"Wasn't Xuan De going to buy ingredients? Why have we left before buying anything?"

"Un, we can always buy them on the way back." I said and looked at the roadside stalls here and there, "Eh... Why isn't there anything suitable..."

Hai, if I knew it would be like this, I should have asked someone along the way first. What should I do now? Even though Feng Xian looks normal now, doubt has probably begun to sprout on her heart.

Un? ... There's fragrant smell of something sweet being cooked.

I followed the scent, and found an old man sitting by the road as he swirled a yellowish-white soup in a pot.

"Umm, what are you selling here?"

"Malt sugar..." He said, without taking his eyes off the pot, "It's 3 coins for 1 bowl. The ones that are done are right this way."

(TL: It's that thick yellow thing you eat on a stick. Not sure if it exists in Western countries but it's basically thick viscous lump of sugar you eat. Diabetes-causing, but worth it.)

I looked at where he pointed at and saw neat rows of bowls containing some viscous material that shone with a slightly yellowish gleam.

Un? Is this candy? Feels like this is some sort of thick broth.

(TL: Not sure why he doesn't know what this is, but it's probably because the malt sugar candy in that era has a lot less sugar due to scarcity and looks more liquid than solid.)

"Feng Xian, have you had this before?"

"Un..." I turned and saw that she was looking at the sticky, viscous material in the bowl as she shook her head.

"Want to try it?"

"Ah... But..." Feng Xian frowned as she shook her sleeve.

Ah right, money!

As I remembered this, I hurriedly felt the pockets in my sleeves. If I remember correctly, Yun Chang seems to have given me some coins that last time.

"Umm... Ah, got it. I'll have 2 bowls, please."

"Un, so sweet!"

We were now walking along as we ate after taking 2 bowls from the old man. And Feng Xian praised the candy with every mouth she took.

"Sweet huh..." I wasn't actually too satisfied with its sweetness. It felt a lot more bland than what I was used to in the contemporary era. But I was still very satisfied with how refreshing and smooth the candy was.

"Thank you Xuan De." All of a sudden, Feng Xian thanked me.

"It's nothing. Shouldn't the guy pay when going out with a girl?"

That is what I was taught at least.

(TL: Bit rich to say that when your money came from another woman...)

"Wu..." Feng Xian didn't reply immediately and turned her face away. After a long while, she finally squeezed some words out, "That sort of thinking is far too outdated, Xuan De."

(TL: But she's too happy at being treated as a girl.)

Seems like she did say something not long after we first met as well. Could it be that she's angry?

I walked up to her as I ate, and stole a glance at Feng Xian. She still had a smile on as she ate, so she was still happy now.

Whatever happens, it's good as long as she's happy.

"Eh?! Isn't this Lord Liu Bei?!" Just then, someone from a shop nearby ran up to me.

Most people know that I have taken over Xu state but since there was no television or photography in this era, nor do I usually declare my name in normal interactions, most ordinary folk don't actually know what I look like.

"Umm, you know who I am?" I asked as I hurriedly saluted him when I saw that he had done so.

"I do I do, I have heard about you before after all." The shopkeeper nodded before taking a look at Feng Xian beside me, "Is Lord Liu Bei bringing his wife around?"

Clatter...

"W, wife!" Feng Xian's bowl slipped down her hands and she began taking deep breaths while she was frozen stiff when she heard this word.

Was Feng Xian angry?

"Umm, I'm not married yet." I hurriedly explained, afraid that Feng Xian would flare up at the shopkeeper, and changed the topic, "What business are you in? What does your shop sell?"

"Ah, we're a textile shop. We just brought in some fabric from Jiangdong so business has been good lately." He ran to the shop and brought me a sample as he said so.

Ah, so it's something like a clothing shop then.

"Ah yes, Feng Xian, do you only have clothes like these?"

"..." She was still frozen stiff.

"Feng Xian?" I asked again.

"Un!" Feng Xian finally recovered and frantically nodded, "Ah, un."

That's a little too plain for a girl's wardrobe.

“Feng Xian, I’ll buy you a set of clothes.”

“Eh?!”

A girl should have more gorgeous clothes after all.

“I, I don’t need it! I’m not fit for such clothes.”

“How can that be?” I turned back and looked at the girl who was uncharacteristically shy, “Feng Xian is really beautiful.”

“Wu!”

Feng Xian seemed to stop resisting after that was easily pulled in by me.

Part 4

"Well then miss, what sort of clothing would you like?" The shopkeeper asked as we entered and began to pick out some rolls of fabric to show us.

"Ah... I don't really know..." Feng Xian frowned and began to feel the rolls of fabric on the table, "But I could like some clothing that would be easy to move about in."

"Eh?" The shopkeeper thought for a bit after he heard what Feng Xian said and had a difficult expression as he replied, "Nice clothes tend to be more fitting so big movements will be a little..."

This Feng Xian... She is definitely thinking about clothes from the perspective of a warrior again.

"Feng Xian, don't think about such things," I shook my head as I turned to the shopkeeper, "Don't worry about that and pick something that would look good on her please."

"Alright, well please wait here for a bit then, Lord Liu Bei." The shopkeeper nodded and brought Feng Xian to the back.

"But... Un..." Feng Xian seemed a little hesitant and looked at me for a while before heading to the back.

It's a little weird to say this now, but it feels like Feng Xian was brought up as a boy as she seems to be much less delicate and sensitive than other girls.

I don't know if this is good or bad, but it is a little sad for her. Even though she does have a prodigious proficiency in martial arts.

But leaving that aside, I finally have a good look at how textile shops look like in the Eastern Han era. Though it looks a little simple, it does seem to have a complete selection of fabrics. From coarse cloth to fine silk, every imaginable fabric seems to be available.

"Un..." I felt a roll of cloth as I thought so. It was very smooth and felt like my hands would slip off if I just lay them on top of the cloth. Naturally, there were no cloths made of mixed fibres in this era.

“That’s silk made in our area, the quality is pretty good.”

“Ah, no. I was just taking a look...” I hurriedly withdrew my hand when I heard someone speak, afraid that I would be scolded. I put on a smile as I looked toward the person and got a shock when I saw her.

She had short, slightly yellow hair that was messy and covered her eyes. When one looks more closely, the eyes behind her hair gleamed like those of a hungry wolf.

“Sun Ce?!” I exclaimed out loud, “Why are you here?”

“Shh!” She hurriedly covered my mouth when she heard me exclaim her name out.

“Don’t yell, I snuck out.”

Eh? Snuck out?

“Un, I should be in Jianye rushing through 2 days and 2 nights’ worth of documents at this time.” She seemed to have seen my questioning look and answered.

“I was able to unify Jiangdong but the amount of work is so much I want to puke just thinking about it.” She slowly said as she released the hand on my mouth.

I feel a sense of camaraderie with Sun Ce on this point. Except that her territories are much more expansive than mine.

“Ke Ke, so that’s it,” I coughed as I smiled helplessly as Sun Ce’s strength was a little too much, “Then is there no one in charge now on your side?”

“Don’t worry~” Sun Ce said with a relaxed expression, “My little sister is very useful at times like these. I’m afraid Gong Jin and Zi Jing are making life difficult for her now~~~ Hahaha~”

This person... Really isn’t the deskbound type huh.

But was the little sister she mentioned before Sun Quan? So Sun Quan is also a girl here huh...

“But isn’t here a little too far for a getaway?”

Sun Ce smiled and pointed south, “Not really. It’s only half a day’s journey from Jianye by boat. I also came here to see old man Tao.”

“Eh? Does Sun Ce know Lord Tao Qian?”

“Un, my father was an old friend of his, and I often came along with my father when he came to visit.”

Eh~~ I never knew. So Sun Jian and Tao Qian were close friends huh. By the way, Tao Qian’s grave in the southern part of Xu state city.

I looked at Sun Ce, and it felt like she seemed exhausted after the month or so since we last met. “Sun Ce, have you been fatigued lately?”

“Un? You can tell?” She said as she rubbed her eyes, “It’s been a little messy at Jiangdong lately and it’s getting difficult to figure out who is loyal and who is treacherous.”

Sun Ce smiled bitterly as she said so and sized me up as she placed her hands on her hips, “Xuan De, on the other hand, seems to be the same as before.”

“What kind of change could happen to me...” I looked about as I said so, “Eh? Then why have you come here?”

Sun Ce scratched her head as she smiled, “There are some tailors from Jiangdong here, and I’ve always gotten them to make my clothes.”

“Hou~~~”

“What? Can’t I wear nice clothes like other girls?” She shot a sharp glance at me to which I hurriedly shook my head.

What she said was on mark though.

Eh? Now that I think about it, the feel I get from Sun Ce and Feng Xian is about the same. Even though they are both warriors through and through, Sun Ce seems a lot more flexible.

“Speaking of which, you don’t have a very wide social circle right, Sun Ce?”

“Eh?” Sun Ce was speaking with a tailor and sank into thought at my question, “That is correct now that you mention it. Apart from a few people close to me, most don’t even dare to look at me.”

The way Sun Ce said it was if it wasn't about herself.

“...”

“Don’t be silent and make it like it’s so serious. Even I feel awkward now.” Sun Ce said and parted her fringe to reveal her eyes, “I know what you mean but I can’t do anything about my eyes.”

Indeed, those eyes made it difficult for people to approach her. Even someone like me who knows Sun Ce will still involuntarily tremble at the sight of these eyes.

“But I’ve gotten past all of that,” Sun Ce smiled, her cheeks slightly reddened for some reason, “You did say my eyes were beautiful before, no?”

Wu... Sun Ce had a very cute smile on as she held back her fringe. And this smile made me feel a little shy. I have always felt that even hardened warriors like her are just ordinary people inside.

“Xuan De...”

Un?

I turned back, and saw Feng Xian in a beautiful red, silk dress with an accessory on her head. Feng Xian was beautiful to begin with, but seeing her in such clothing was inexplicably refreshing.

If her expression would soften, Feng Xian would probably look every inch an elegant beautiful lady.

Come to think of it, Feng Xian should have met Sun Ce before right. “Umm, Feng Xian, this person is...”

“Ha!” Just as I was about to introduce her, Feng Xian suddenly lunged at Sun Ce and tried to land a punch on her!

Sun Ce was shocked but she still dodged it instinctively by stepping back and hurriedly exited the shop.

“Feng Xian, what are you doing!”

“Don’t be afraid, Xuan De. I will protect you even if I’m unarmed.” Feng Xian said as she stood in front of me and pointed at Sun Ce, “Look at that person’s

eyes, Xuan De. Thos are the same bloodthirsty eyes of a warrior like mine. She's definitely an enemy!"

Eh? Didn't Feng Xian see Sun Ce before? Why...

I looked at Sun Ce and found my answer. Sun Ce currently had her fringe up and with her eyes in full view, seemed like a completely different person.

"Feng Xian, it's a misunderstanding! That person is..."

"Xuan De!" Just as I was about to explain, Sun Ce stopped me and shook her head with a smile.

Eh? What does that mean?!

Part 5

At this moment, Sun Ce's eyes gleamed as though she felt the current situation seemed interesting. Her lips curled and she seemed at ease despite facing a cold and sullen Feng Xian.

Could she be having fun?

"..." Just as I was trying to guess what Sun Ce was thinking, Feng Xian began to act. She gently jumped and leapt down 3 steps, and immediately lashed out a punch the moment she landed.

Sun Ce dodged yet again and retreated as she did so.

"Ha!" Feng Xian saw that her punches were not connecting and began connecting chains of attacks from various directions.

I never knew that Feng Xian was so skilled in unarmed combat on top of her astute mastery of weapons.

"Kuh!" In a short time frame, Feng Xian had begun to overwhelm Sun Ce and was able to send Sun Ce flying when she saw an opening. Sun Ce was able to land with much difficulty after taking a long while to regain her balance in the air.

And with this short exchange, quite a number of people had begun to crowd around.

"We only met briefly the last time so I never thought that Xuan De would have such a strong subordinate general." Sun Ce said as she wiped the sweat on her forehead.

"Haven't you had enough? Do you have to get so violent?" The first sentence was directed at Sun Ce while the second was directed at Feng Xian.

I don't know much about unarmed combat but I could tell that every move would have been fatal had it landed on Sun Ce's body.

"..." Feng Xian remained silent, and I was unsure if she could still hear me.

"Xuan De, don't bother," Sun Ce seemed to have gotten even more energetic than before, "I don't like wars, but I like exchanging blows in a proper duel. And

besides, she's the same kind of person as I am."

Un... I was still worried as I don't know whether they know how strong they and each other really are but from my perspective Sun Ce is quite dangerous.

"Alright," Seems like rest time is over. Sun Ce called out raised her fists in front of her chest, "It's my turn now— Eh?"

Just as Sun Ce was about to charge forth, 2 figures leapt out from the crowd and rapidly held down Sun Ce. I don't know what just happened but it's good that the fight didn't continue.

"Cheng Pu, Han Dang, let me go now!"

"Give up, my lord." "Returning obediently is the right decision."

Sun Ce flailed her arms with all her might, and it was clear that her strength was not to be trifled with, but she couldn't shrug off the 2 large human walls.

"My lord really doesn't know how to act. Leaving your work behind and running away is bad enough but to think you actually caused a ruckus in someone else's city." A high girl's voice came from the crowd. I tried, but failed, to find the source.

"This voice... Zhang, Zhang Zi Bu!?"

Sun Ce, who had been vigorously struggling till just now, began to show a look of fear when she heard this voice.

"If you know I'm here then stop resisting. Your mother is already very angry."

Zhang Zi Bu?! Is it Jiangdong's Zhang Zhao? From what I remember, Zhang Zhao should be an old man... Even if Zhang Zhao is a girl, her voice doesn't sound old at all.

I tried again to find her figure in the crowd but I couldn't find her wat all.

"H, how did she..." Sun Ce suffered yet another blow when Zhang Zhao used her mother.

"Oi..." Feng Xian, who had been forgotten all this while, finally began to speak up and called out to the despondent Sun Ce.

"Ah, sorry Lord Lu Bu." Sun Ce seems to have recovered somewhat and ruffled

her hair as she returned her fringe to how she usually had it, “How is this? Do you recognise me now? I’m Sun Ce, we met during the expedition to attack Yuan Shu.”

“Un...” Feng Xian sank into silence.

Eh? Did she really forget about Sun Ce!?

“... Oh.” After a long while, Feng Xian seemed to have finally remembered and dropped her guard.

Looks like I’ll have to get Feng Xian to learn how to remember people’s faces in future.

“The one standing on the stairs should be Lord Liu Bei right?” Just then, Zhang Zhao in the crowds began speaking once more.

“Ah, un.” I hurriedly replied.

“We hereby apologise for the trouble our lord has brought upon you.”

As she said so, the 2 big, burly men, Cheng Pu and Han Dang, bowed deeply.

“It’s alright... There weren’t any damages anyway.”

“Lord Liu Bei need not decline our apologies. We will also bear the costs for all your expenses today.” Zhang Zhao said as I was still trying to find her, “We’ll be leaving then.”

As she said so, the 2 men kept their hold on Sun Ce while they carried her out through the crowds.

“Ah, right. Lord Lu Bu.” Just then, Sun Ce who was being carried off shouted to Feng Xian, “Being a warrior is a thing to be proud of, but you have to learn how to be a woman. Just knowing martial arts alone won’t bring you happiness.”

Sun Ce was probably trying to encourage Feng Xian. I don’t quite understand what she’s trying to say, but since she said ‘to be a woman’, I gave up trying to understand as I probably wouldn’t be able to anyway.

“...” Feng Xian didn’t reply her but she nodded resolutely at Sun Ce’s back.

I sometimes feel that women have some sort of inexplicable understanding between each other.

“How are you, Feng Xian?” I asked worriedly as I walked over to her. She didn’t speak and seemed to only have full regained her senses as she began to inspect herself.

The clothes were naturally damaged, as every major joint was torn open, revealing Feng Xian’s bare skin. The bottom was also badly torn as it had been dragged across the floor and Feng Xian had unleashed some kicks as well.

“... Sorry, I spoiled the clothes.” Feng Xian said remorsefully as she lowered her head.

“It’s nothing, don’t be so bothered about it.” Zhang Zhao did mention that she would pay for it anyway.

“But...” Feng Xian shook her lowered head, “... This was Xuan De’s first set of clothes for me. And I actually...”

I saw several shiny drops fall to the ground as Feng Xian stammered. It felt like a kid had broken her beloved toy.

I don’t know what Feng Xian is thinking inside, but I think she is very cute when it comes to things like this.

Naturally, I can’t say this out loud.

(TL: MC is a sadist lol. You know what they say, the more proper they seem, the more perverted they are.)

“It’s alright,” I said as I squatted down and dusted her clothes, “If you like this set that much, we can always get someone to mend it. I hear the tailors here are very good.”

Feng Xian turned her head away and took a few steps back out of shyness when she saw me do this.

“Alright, go and change out of this set of clothes first. When it’s mended, we’ll collect it again.” I said as I patted Feng Xian’s back, hoping to help her control her emotions.

Feng Xian nodded and went into the shop to change.

I used this opening to ask the shopkeeper something I just thought of and the answer was exactly as I thought it would be.

"Alright, help me send this note to this place."

Part 6

TL: Last part.

Feng Xian changed back to her plain clothing and she was still visibly down. Seeing how she looked, I did my best to greet her with a smile.

“Xuan De...”

“No need to say thing. It’s alright.” I went up and patted her arms which felt slim and strong, “Hey mister, help me mend this set of clothing. I’ll be back later to get it.”

The shopkeeper nodded and saw us out. As we left the shop, I saw that there were more people on the streets. I looked up and saw that the sun had already passed its peak. Without knowing it, the morning had passed.

“Are you hungry, Feng Xian? Want to go get something?”

Though Yi De did want to eat with us, things have changed and they have things to do on their side now.

“...” Feng Xian wordlessly shook her head.

This is bad, there’s still quite a while before the sun sets and I don’t know where to kill time in the city...

“Umm, Feng Xian. Do you really have no special places you want to go?” I ended up asking Feng Xian again as I had no ideas.

“Un,” Feng Xian nodded, “Xuan De, I’m accompanying you today so shouldn’t we go to places you would like to go to?”

Un? Places I would like to go?

I don’t have anywhere I’d particularly like to go. To me, this era doesn’t have much amusements that could enthrall me.

But... Now that she said that...

“Then... Feng Xian, you want to go up the city walls to get some fresh air?”

“Un?” Feng Xian wasn’t sure how to respond to my sudden words, and only nodded after a long while, and thereafter followed after me as we made our way to the staircase leading up the city walls.

Not just anyone can go up the city walls. Apart from the guards on duty, one would have to at least be a 100-man general to be able to go up the city walls, and would usually have to have an official reason to do so.

That said, it wasn’t like anyone would be that free to go up the city walls. Only someone like me who literally had nothing to do would make the climb and enjoy the breeze up high.

By the way, this interest began taking root after my first conversation with Taishi Ci at the roof of Kong Rong’s residence. Whenever we were in Xu state, I would always come here and look down at the scenery.

It’s not like there are a shortage of high places, but I always come here anyway.

Soon, I and Feng Xian made it to the top. Though it was hot due to the lack of shelter from the sun, the autumn breeze helped to keep things cool. I turned back to look at Feng Xian but her expression was still sullen.

This level of scenery is probably nothing impressive to Feng Xian as expected.

But thanks to the atmosphere up here, it became easier for me to start a conversation. “Though it was a misunderstanding, I must still thank you for what happened before.”

“Eh? What is Xuan De saying this for,” Feng Xian shook her head, “Ah, now that you mentioned it, I haven’t apologised to Lord Sun Ce yet. I can’t believe I couldn’t recognise her just because her hairstyle was different. What a blunder.”

I might have made the same mistake had I not seen her with her fringe up before.

“It’s alright, Sun Ce won’t bear a grudge.”

“Un...” Feng Xian had a troubled look again when she heard Sun Ce’s name. She didn’t say anything but I could guess what she was thinking.

“Feng Xian?”

"Ah, no." Feng Xian shook her head and revealed a meaningful smile, "I'm just envious of Lord Sun Ce, that's all."

Envious? That was a word that Feng Xian hardly uses. I was puzzled but quickly understood what she meant.

Even though they were both warriors and had auras and dispositions that made it hard for others to approach; yet why was it that Sun Ce was able to live like a normal person?

In Feng Xian's mind, she must have thought that strength could only be cultivated in solitude. But seeing Sun Ce achieve strength without solitude was inexplicable to Feng Xian and she must have felt that Sun Ce was much stronger than her mentally.

I looked at Feng Xian's calm face as she looked out at the mountains outside the city in a daze.

Damn it, I wanted to make Feng Xian happy but now the mood has become so melancholic. I'm not even confident of restoring Feng Xian's normal mood, let alone accomplish xiao Yong's task.

I'm not well-versed in flattery, but I can say what I really feel. "What is there to be envious about? You just need to be yourself."

"Xuan De?" Feng Xian's face looked tired when she heard what I said, "But can't I want to be like Lord Sun Ce?"

"Is that why you feel inferior? Perhaps you think that your involuntary anti-social aura turns people off?"

"..." It was clear that I was right as Feng Xian had nothing to say in rebuttal.

And in truth, Feng Xian's effort to overcome that was plain to see.

"Feng Xian, I can assure you that what you're worried about won't come to pass."

"Eh?"

I looked at the bewildered Feng Xian and lightly patted her shoulders. "Because you really are a girl." I slowly said what I'd felt for a long while, "When you play with Red Hare, the smile you have is just as cute as any other girl. When

you meet with problematic things, you get troubled just like any other girl. You may not have realised this, but you seemed really happy putting on new clothes just like any other girl.”

“Ah...” Feng Xian seemed to be in utter shock at what I said and she stood there and stared at me with her eyes wide open unblinkingly. After a long while, she involuntarily shivered and turned her face away, “Xuan De really knows how to joke around...”

“That wasn’t a joke,” I said as I reached out and grasped Feng Xian’s slender arms and forcefully turned her around, “Your personality may be a bit unbridled and aggressive, and it feels like it’s difficult to approach you; but that doesn’t change the fact that you’re an ordinary girl. What you lack is not beauty but courage to accept yourself.”

“I...” Feng Xian was still awkward and was still unable to accept what I said. She shrugged my arms off and curled into a ball and hid her face.

I still had more to say but just then, a commotion from the city drew my attention.

Had it begun already? That was fast.

“Feng Xian, listen to the sounds coming from the city.”

Feng Xian slowly raised her head from between her legs and began to frown. “Is there a rebellion?!?”

“Ah, no. It’s...” Before I could finish, Feng Xian got up and made to jump down the city walls as she looked down. But when she saw what was going on in the city, she stopped her movements.

I walked over to where Feng Xian was with all smiles and looked down at the city as well. That said, I knew what was going on even without looking.

The civilians of the city were busy with putting up various coloured decorations while the shopkeepers and stall owners who had gone home in the afternoon were now opening up once more, and it seemed like they were in even greater numbers than before. People were bringing out food and drink from their homes and sharing with each other as they made merry and spoke and laughed with each other.

“I haven’t seen such a lively scene in a very long while. What is the occasion...” Feng Xian was baffled at what she saw since today was neither the Emperor’s birthday nor was it any special holiday. Such a lively atmosphere was rare in these troubled times.

But she didn’t know that a while ago, I had sent a message back to the town hall to get Yun Chang and the rest to organise this.

Though these may be troubled times, the ordinary people need some of the happiness and fun that they used to have in peaceful times. Even a flower that blooms for but a transient moment is a beautiful sight to behold.

Of course, my true motive for doing this was primarily for my own selfish reasons.

“Feng Xian... Feng Xian?”

“... Un?” Feng Xian was in a daze as she looked out at the city and only recovered after I called out several times.

I smiled, and brought out what I had been hiding behind me for a long while now.

It was a hairpin. I passed it to Feng Xian.

“Is this... For me?”

I nodded.

“You’ve been with me for a very long while now and I’ve always wanted to thank you properly. I’m a blockhead so I don’t really know what would be a good gift for girls. I bought this today at the market and it’s not too expensive. I would like it if you accepted it.”

“Ah... Ah! How can I...” Feng Xian frantically wiped her hands on her clothes before hurriedly receiving the hairpin.

“Umm, thank you, Xuan De.” She gazed at the hairpin for a long while before she was able to thank me in a calm voice.

I could tell that she was elated at receiving a gift. Isn’t she just like any other girl in this regard?

"Honestly, I do feel inferior." Feng Xian said in a voice that was unlike her usual calm tone, "Since young, I've always been used as a tool for fights or as a trophy. So all this while, I've never known things like dressing up, nor have I felt much happiness or other moving emotions."

Elation began to spread across her face as Feng Xian continued, "But ever since I've joined Xuan De, I feel that my life has gained meaning and joy."

As she finished, she began to clumsily put on her hairpin. It was a little lopsided, but it still brought out a lot of Feng Xian's womanly charms.

"I think I've found what I want," Feng Xian said as she headed toward the staircase and turned back and flashed me a smile.

Feng Xian's smile was bland but I knew that it contained a lot of happiness behind it.

Because that smile was just too beautiful.

"... I see." At this time, I could only smile in return.

A smile is the best reply to another smile after all.

I closed my eyes and calmed myself down before I made to follow Feng Xian.

"Xuan De."

"Un? ..."

Just as I replied, my lips were enveloped by a warm fragrance.

I opened my eyes in bewilderment and doubt only to see Feng Xian who should have been ahead of me just a few centimeters away from my face.

We only parted after a few seconds.

"... Feng Xian."

"... D, don't say anything. I just wanted to express how thankful I am." Feng Xian said as she turned away, her shoulders trembling out of shyness like before.

"Oh, oh." At her reply, I didn't say much and just accepted it as it was.

But it seems like I've somehow bungled my way into accomplishing the task? Feels a little too unreal. I pinched my face as I thought so, but it hurt.

“Lord Jian Yong is really too much. Must I do this to express my thankfulness? It’s so embarrassing...”

“Eh?”

Did xiao Yong arrange for this? That sneaky fellow... Could it be that she planned for everything that happened?

“Xuan De.”

“Un, un?”

“Umm,” Feng Xian seems to have gotten her emotions in order, and smiled at me as she stood one step below, “I look forward to getting along with you from now on as well!”

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Translated by [asd398](#)

Afterword

I have a lot to do so I'll just write an afterword today.

Etto... Looking back, it's already the 4th volume. Because there's been a lot of back and forth, I've not been able to finish the Battle of Guandu in this volume. As the last chapter in volume 4 has alluded to, the next volume will cover the Battle of Guandu and the Crossing of Passes and Slaying of Generals. I'll be getting busier and busier so releases will be slower. I seek everyone's understanding on this.

One other thing I can reveal is that, Zhu Ge should appear in the next volume. Because I haven't thought about the concept for the next volume, I don't know where I'll stop and I'll just have to see how it goes.

I will be waiting for the results of voting which will be out on the 15th. The character with the highest votes will get an extra story written.

Honestly, I feel like I've written less than 20% of the story but even I am not sure if I can finish it. But I feel that I should be able to keep at it.

Un, should be.

I don't have much else to say except thank you to everyone for your votes and messages. Please do continue supporting me. Everyone can try and guess how they think the story will go. Of course, I hardly ever reveal plot spoilers.

Finally, I'm really grateful to artist 波导君. I always have opinions and revisions to make but comrade 波导 never complains for which I am very thankful for. Thank you very much onz, and please do continue helping me draw more beautiful character designs.

Well then, I'll see you in the next volume or extra story.